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Preparedness Levels of Middle School Teachers, Assistant Principals, and Principals to Respond to Acts of Violence in a Mississippi School District

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PREPAREDNESS LEVELS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS, ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS, AND PRINCIPALS TO RESPOND TO ACTS OF VIOLENCE IN A MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

Judy Ann Boyd

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to determine the preparedness levels of middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals to respond to acts of violence. Violence has existed since the beginning of organized education. School violence has increased more than 50% in the last 10 years. The murder rate among 14-to 17-year-olds increased 165% from 1985 to 1995, according to a 1995 U.S. Justice Department report on juvenile offenders and their victims (Kadel, Watkins, Follman, & Hammond, 1999).

The instrument used for this study was a researcher-created survey with some modified questions taken from the survey found in the Mississippi School Safety Manual Appendix II (Mississippi Department of Education Office of Safe and Orderly Schools and Mississippi Office of Attorney General, 2005). The questionnaire contained a total of 40 questions, with questions being based on a 4-point and 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire asked for teacher experiences, student experiences, preparedness level, and ranking problems within the school, as well as demographic information.

The questionnaire results were analyzed by calculating the means, standard deviations, independent samples t-test, and Pearson correlation. There were ancillary findings showing a correlation between seriousness and occurrences and student reports and seriousness. A Pearson correlation was also used to analyze this data.

Once the data was analyzed, it was determined that middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals perceive themselves as prepared to respond to acts of violence. The number of years of experience does not have a direct effect on the level of preparedness in dealing with acts of violence. The teachers who are assigned to the alternative school stated that they have the same preparation as teachers who are assigned to traditional middle school settings. The performance classification of a school did not have a direct effect on the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, or principals. There was not a correlation between the number of occurrences reported by students and the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals. There also was no correlation between the number of occurrences and the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Violence has existed in the school environment since the beginning of organized education. The 1997-1998 school year marked a turning point in American history. The turning point was a realization that America's youth has turned to violence to handle school-related disputes (Panzer, 2001). School safety is a major concern of students, teachers, parents, and administrators and has been the main focus in numerous research studies over the past few years (Astor, 1998; Astor & Meyer, 2001; Astor, Meyer & Beher, 1999; Astor, Meyer & Pitner, 2001; Furlong, Chung, Bates & Morrison, 1995; Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Lockwood, 1997; May & Dunaway, 2000; Mayer & Leone, 1999; Schreck, Miller & Gibson, 2003; VanderJagt, Jianping & Hsieh, 2001; Welch, Stokes & Green, 2000).

School violence has increased more than 50% in the last 10 years. The murder rate among 14- to 17-year-olds increased 165% from 1985 to 1995, according to a 1995 U.S. Justice Department Report on juvenile offenders and their victims (Kadel, Watkins, Follman, & Hammond, 1999). The National Center of Health Statistics reported that 14 young people aged 19 and under, are killed every day as a result of gun use (Meeks, Heit & Page, 1995). According to the Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher of 1993, 11% of teachers and 23% of students have indicated that they have been victims of violence in or near their schools.

The Center For Disease Control And Prevention (CDCP) has defined violence as, "the threatened or actual physical force or power initiated by an individual that results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in, physical or psychological injury or death" (p.8). The most common form of violence against teachers is simple assault. Middle School teachers are the most at-risk of suffering from a violent act on campus, followed by those teachers working on a high school campus. Male teachers are more likely to be assaulted than female teachers. Every school day, 6,250 teachers are threatened with injury and 260 teachers suffer an actual assault (Center For Disease Control And Prevention [CDCP], 1999).

According to Rich (1992), the problems of the outside world are causing disorder and chaos in the traditionally protected environment of the school. Children who are victims of crime, drugs and violence at home are more likely to act out in the classroom. Males are more likely than females to carry weapons; however, females are more likely to carry or use knives than guns (Hill & Drolet, 1999; Weiler, 2000). The research of the 1990s has reported that "guns kill about 25 youngsters every two days, and adolescents between ages 10 to 19 years are killed by guns at a rate of one every three hours" (Wood & Zalud, 1996, p. 397). The chances of a student dying a violent death in an American high school is five times higher than in other developed industrialized countries (Shafii & Shafii, 2001).

According to the 27th annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools, the lack of discipline is the worst problem in schools. School

violence is still one of the top five most pressing educational problems that public schools must address (Rose & Gallup, 2000). According to a study conducted by Fitzpatrick (1999), "there are certain socio-demographic subgroups of youth at greater risk of being victims of violence" (p. 1056) than the population as a whole. Black, Hispanic, and Asian students are frequently involved in behaviors related to school violence more often than White students (Hill & Drolet, 1999). It is not always possible to predict behavior that will lead to violence; however, educators, parents, and students can recognize certain early warning signs.

Statement of the Problem

There are approximately fifty million students who attend 108,000 public schools across America (Shafii & Shafii, 2001). Teachers, assistant principals, and principals are responsible for keeping all students safe in all types of situations. How prepared are school officials to respond to acts of violence? The world in which we live never allows us to know exactly when a crisis situation will erupt (Brock, Sandoval, & Lewis, 2001). With the introduction of the Internet and cable television, American citizens are able to watch crises situations unravel in school locations across the country. Lichtenstein, Schonfeld, and Kline (1994) recognized that although administrators are not taught how to prepare their staff for crisis situations during their certification training, it is something they need to do. "The astute administrator does not question whether a crisis will occur, but when it will occur, how serious it will be, and what response should be" (p. 80). Nims and Wilson (1998) reasoned that schools might be hesitant because school

personnel do not have the knowledge and skills to design and implement policies and strategies.

Teacher training programs tend to focus on curriculum, standards, and classroom management. These programs are designed to teach teachers how to teach not how to deal with the shy student in class who at any moment could turn violent. Administrative training programs focus on leadership, organizational management, fiscal resources, and public relations. Administrators receive minimal inadequate training on school violence. According to the National Policy Board For Educational Administration (1993) role play, studying acts of violence, or creating real-life scenarios are not always part of the administrative curriculum.

As part of teacher preparation Brock, Sandoval, and Lewis (2001) suggested that teachers learn to recognize and acknowledge the responses they may experience in the event of a crisis. In conjunction with this activity, teachers should be presented with the understanding of what it means to be in crisis. "The crisis state results in significant upset, discomfort, anxiety, disorganization and/or disequilibrium" (p. 15). Without proper preparation a teacher's ability to proceed through practiced procedures may become compromised.

The purpose of this study was to examine the preparedness level of novice teachers, experienced teachers, and administrators who work in the five middle schools in a Mississippi School District along with an alternative school. Data from this study was used to gain insight to teacher trainings not only at the school, but also at the college level.

Purpose of the Study

Data from this study was used to gain insight of the preparedness levels of administrators and teachers. Research indicated that perception of danger at school negatively impacted students' attendance, confidence, and grades (Bowen & Bowen, 1999; Bowen, Richman, Brewster, & Bowen, 1998; Lowry, Cohen, Modzeleski, Kann, Collins, & Kilbe, 1999; Martin, Sadowski, Cotton, & McCarraher, 1996). Approximately 20% of students surveyed were reluctant to attend school or wanted to change schools due to concerns about violence. Five percent of seventh graders surveyed had skipped school due to fear of victimization (Malek, Chang, & Davis, 1998).

In 1999, a survey involving 129,593 students in grades 6-12 from urban, suburban, and rural schools, both private and public, indicated that 71% of the students personally felt safe from violence in school (May, 2000). Data derived from this study was used to provide additional information to school administrators as they address school violence and promote school safety. According to Mawson, Lapley, Hoffman, and Guignard (2002), research should be conducted to determine the factors associated with school violence. This research was used to help meet the need and provide insight to various preventative measures to help reduce incidents.

Research Questions

1. Are middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals prepared to respond to an act of violence to include but not limited to aggravated assault, robbery/extortion, sex offenses, or possession of a weapon?

2. Do the number of years of experience have an effect on the preparedness level of how a middle school teacher, assistant principal, and principal will respond to an act of violence to include but not limited to aggravated assault, robbery/extortion, sex offenses, or possession of a weapon?
3. Are teachers who are assigned to the alternative school more prepared to deal with acts of violence than teachers who are assigned to a middle school?
4. Does the performance classification of a school have an effect on the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals?
5. Is there a correlation between the number of occurrences reported and the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals?
6. Is there a correlation between the number of occurrences reported by students and the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals?

Definition of Terms

Certain terms are used frequently in this study. The definitions of these terms are as follows:

Aggravated assault- attack or attempted attack with a weapon, regardless of whether or not an injury occurs, and attack without a weapon when serious injury results (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Assault with a deadly weapon- the use of a firearm, deadly weapon, or instrument other than a firearm, or by any means of force likely to produce great bodily injury (Mississippi Department of Education Office of Safe and Orderly Schools and Mississippi Office of Attorney General, 2005).

At school- inside the school building, on school property (school parking area, play area, school bus, etc.), or on the way to or from school (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Attendance center- a school in a school district that is located on one school site and has on principal administering the educational program for all the grades in the school (Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2008).

Battery- an unprovoked attack of violence upon another (Mississippi Department of Education Office of Safe and Orderly Schools and Mississippi Office of Attorney General, 2005).

Crime- any violation of a statue or regulation or any act that the government has determined is injurious to the public, including felonies and misdemeanors. Such violation may or may not involve violence, and it may affect individuals or property (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Elementary school- primary, elementary, and intermediate division of the educational system within the school district comprising grades/levels K-6 or K-8 or any combination of such grades (Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2008).

Extortion- threat to take or the taking of property from another person without their consent (Butts & Travis, 2002).

Firearm/explosive device- any weapon that is designed to (or may readily be converted to) expel a projectile by the action of an explosive. This includes guns, bombs, grenades, mines, rockets, missiles, pipe bombs, similar devices designated to explode and

capable of causing bodily harm or property damage (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Gang- group of people who form an allegiance for a common purpose (Second Chance Youth Programs, 2003).

Gang activity- acts of a group of people who form an allegiance for a common purpose of engaging in violent, unlawful, or criminal activity (Second Chance Youth Programs, 2003).

High school- the secondary division within the educational system of the school district comprising grades 9-12 or an combination of such grades (Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2008).

Homicide- an act involving a killing of one person by another resulting from interpersonal violence (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Incident- a specific criminal act or offense involving one or more victims and one or more offenders (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Juvenile- legal status of juvenile is extended to all people under the age of fifteen (Butts & Travis, 2002).

Middle school- a school with any configuration of intermediate grades 4-8 whose principal may be licensed as an elementary school administrator or a secondary school administrator (Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2008).

MSIS- Mississippi Student Information System

"Other" weapons- any weapon that is not considered a gun or a knife, which could include but is not limited to a club, scissors, or brass knuckles (Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2008).

Performance classifications- achievement and growth combined together for an overall rating as follows:

a. Star school;

b. High performing;

c. Successful;

d. Academic watch;

e. At-risk-of-failing; and

f. Failing

(Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2008).

Possession of a weapon- unauthorized possession of dangerous weapons, which include, but are not limited to, firearms and knives (Mississippi Department of Education Office of Safe and Orderly Schools and Mississippi Office of Attorney General, 2005).

Rural- includes a variety of localities, ranging from sparsely populated rural areas to cities with populations of less than 50,000 (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

School- an educational institution consisting of one or more of grades Kindergarten (K) through 12 (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

School-associated violent death- a homicide or suicide in which the fatal injury occurred on the campus of a functioning elementary or secondary school in the United

States, while the victim was on the way to or from regular session at such a school, or while the victim was attending or traveling to or from an official school-sponsored event. Victims include nonstudents as students and staff members (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

School crime- any criminal activity that is committed on school property (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

School resource officer program- a community policing approach practiced in the school environment where the school is regarded as the community/officer's beat (Trump, 1998).

School violence- "any behavior that violates a school's educational mission or climate of respect, or jeopardizes the intent of the school to be free of aggression against persons or property, drugs, weapons, disruptions, and disorder"(Center For The Study And Prevention Of Violence, 2002,n.p.).

Serious violent crime- rape, sexual assault, robbery, or aggravated assault (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Serious violent incidents- includes rape; sexual battery other than rape, physical attacks or fights with a weapon, threats of physical attack with a weapon, and robbery with or without a weapon (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Suburban- county or counties containing a central city, plus any contiguous counties that are linked socially and economically to the central city (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Urban- the largest city in a metropolitan statistical area (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Violence- threatening the actual use of physical force or power against another person, against oneself, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, or deprivation (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010).

Violent crimes- rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, or simple assault (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Violent incidents- include rape, sexual battery, other than rape, physical attacks or fights with or without a weapon, threats of physical attack with or without a weapon, robbery with or without a weapon (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Weapon- any instrument or object used with the intent to threaten, injure, or kill. Includes look-alikes if they are used to threaten others (National Center For Education Statistics, 2009).

Years of experience as a principal- total number of years a principal has served in the position of principal (Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2008).

Years of experience in education- the total number of years an individual has been in the field of education (Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2008).

Delimitations

This study was delimited to middle schools in one Mississippi School District. This district has a total student population of approximately 13,000 students with

approximately 2,000 of which attended one of five middle schools or the alternative school.

Most of the available literature dealing with school violence centers on schools located in urban and inner city areas. The schools surveyed for the purpose of this study are located in rural, suburban, and urban areas. The questionnaire was only given to teachers and administrators who worked at one of the five middle schools. Sixth grade is considered a middle school grade; however, only three middle schools in the district house the sixth grade. This study did not investigate the other school districts located in the state or private and parochial schools.

Assumptions

The assumptions were that all participants answered the survey honestly and to the best of their ability. The assumption was also that respondents followed directions and completed the survey in a manner consistent with its intentions.

Justification

The justification for conducting this study was to see if the current trainings in place are efficient and effective in preparing teachers, assistant principals and principals in dealing with acts of violence. Schools were relatively safe compared with homes and neighborhoods, but rates of weapon possession and violence remained high in and around schools (Elliot, Hamburg, & Williams, 1998). In 1999, a survey was conducted involving approximately 129,593 students in grades 6-12 from urban, suburban, and rural schools, both private and public. This survey indicated 71% of the students personally felt safe from violence in school (May, 2000).

Summary

The past twenty years in public education have been the deadliest ever recorded. As violence continues to permeate the halls of public education at an alarming rate, employees of public schools are entrusted to keep students safe as well as educate them. Schools are an extension of society; it is inevitable that guns, drugs, gangs, and crime sprees cannot be kept away from what was once thought of as a sanctuary. Preparation for "when" an act of violence occurs not "if" is a must as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter II reviews how violence has penetrated into American schools and society. The two major purposes of schools are to facilitate the cognitive/academic and the personal/social development of our youth (Fullan, 1991). Due to constant media coverage, the Internet, and immediate access, schools now appear to be less safe than they actually are. Schools are among the safest places for children (Jimerson, Morrison, Pletcher, & Forlong, 2006). The response to the media coverage at all levels of government has been to protect American schools. The fact is less than one percent of all violent deaths of children occur on school grounds (Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998). According to Dinkes, Cataldi, Kena, Baum, and Snyder (2006), schools should be free of crime and violence and should continue to be safe havens for teaching and learning.

At the highest level of development, the nation's seventh educational goal set to have been established by the 2000 reads: "By the year 2000, every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning" (National Educational Goals Panel, 2007, p.7). Findings of the National Center For Education Statistics (2009) have revealed this goal has yet to be met. Data collected between July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005, has shown that youth ages 5-18 were victims of 28 school-associated deaths. This translates to approximately one homicide or suicide per 2 million students enrolled during the 2004-2005 school year (Dinkes et al., 2006).

The problem of school violence, especially at the middle school level, is an important social issue that needs to be addressed at all levels of society such as the larger culture, communities, schools, and homes. Constitutional Rights Foundation (2007) reported the following:

> Middle school students are more than twice as likely as high school students to be affected by school violence. Seven percent of eighth graders stay home at least once a month to avoid a bully. Twenty-two percent of urban 11- and 12-year-olds know at least one person their age in a gang. The typical victim of an attack or robbery at school is a male in the seventh grade who is assaulted by a boy his own age. (p.1)

The media's coverage of school violence has provoked awareness on many levels including the need for a "closer analysis of how schools have handled security and crisis preparedness in the past and how they need to rethink and refine for the future" (Trump, 2000, p. 3).

A study conducted by Fagan (1994), a legal analyst and clinical psychologist, suggested that illegitimacy is the key factor fueling crime. If the rising illegitimacy rate is not reversed, violent teenage crime will continue to explode, causing an extensive and serious erosion of public safety across the country. There are many reasons for the immorality of young people. Wallis (1995) stated that a primary reason for failure in the educational system is the lack of teaching traditional morals and values that bind American society and culture. Teaching right from wrong has as much bearing on culture's survival as teaching reading, writing, and science.

Chapter II reviews the literature related to school violence in American society and how violence has penetrated into the schools. A review of the literature relevant to crisis theory, youth violence in America, school violence statistics, the recognition of school violence, factors that lead to school violence are presented along with legal responses as well as state and federal mandates that have been generated over mass media coverage of school violence, and a call for training. Violence prevention strategies will also be discussed, including examining safe schools plans.

Theoretical Framework

Crisis Theory

The development of crisis theory as it is today has its roots based in the 1942 fire at the Cocoanut Grove Night Club located in the Bay Village of Boston. The November 28th fire that lasted approximately 15 minutes took the lives of 492 people (Thomas, 1992). Following this fire, Lidemann began working with the survivors to gain an understanding of their grief reactions to the crisis. It was through working with survivors of the Cocoanut Grove fire that Lindemann developed a frame of reference that was constructed around the concept of emotional crisis. In this construct, it is explained that situations were more likely to become a crisis for those individuals "who because of personality, previous experiences, and other factors are especially vulnerable to this stress and whose emotional resources are taxed beyond their usual adaptive resources" (Aguilera, 1998, p. 2). Caplan joined Lindemann in his work and together they established the first community-wide mental health program, known as the Wellesley Project located in the Harvard area of Boston (Aguilera, 1998; Brock et al., 2001).

Through this project they continued their work in the direction of crisis intervention. Further developments in this area have led to an understanding that an individual who enters a crisis state is neither ill nor pathological; they instead are experiencing a realistic struggle in their current life situation (Slaiku, 1990).

Capalan's major contribution to crisis theory came from his observation that crisis not only come from situational factors such as the 1942 Cocoanut Grove fire, but also developmental transitions. Situational crises are unexpected or accidental where as developmental crisis are associated with movement from one stage of life to another (Slaiku, 1990). Caplan worked with children and opened the idea that children who cope with a crisis are those who have the resources needed to endure emotional disequilibrium. Possessing this ability allows the child to make the changes necessitated by a crisis (Brock, Sandoval, & Lewis, 2001).

Caplan (1964) explained that in one's normal day-to-day activities, operation exists under consistent patterns, which have been developed over time and on an individual basis. During normal operation, individuals encounter situations, which call for problem solving measures. The measures of problem solving are "habitual mechanism and reactions" (Caplan, 1964, p. 38). Humans employ this as a means of returning oneself to their normal consistency pattern, or equilibrium, which is maintained by "homeostatic re-equilibrating mechanisms" (Caplan, 1964, p. 38). When an individual encounters a problem, and their equilibrium is upset, their problem solving mechanisms are brought forth. The individual will use a method previously used to solve a similar problem in a

similar length of time. Caplan was the first theorist to associate the idea of homeostasis with crisis intervention (Smith, 1990).

Slaiku (1990) defined crisis as, "a temporary state of upset and disorganization, chiefly by and individual's inability to cope with a particular situation using customary methods of problem solving, and by the potential for a radically positive or negative outcome" (Slaiku, 1990, p. 15). Aguilera (1998) broke the word crisis down further to be composed of two Chinese characters, danger and opportunity. Crisis is explained as a danger because it threatens to overwhelm the individual. Within the same Chinese word, crisis is explained by Lidell and Scott (as cited in Slaiku, 1990), as an opportunity at which there is a turning point that leads to a change for the better or the worse. Also using the Chinese character reference, Aguilera (1990) stated that the opportunity in crisis is a time when an individual is more receptive to therapeutic influence.

It is the customary methods of problem solving offered in Slaiku's (1990) definition of the word crisis that Caplan (1964) referred to in his idea of a human's desire to return to equilibrium. In a crisis situation, the process of re-equilibration is exaggerated because the normal methods are unsuccessful with larger stimuli and a different time span. In the situation of a crisis, the problem, or stimulus, is not resolved using previously employed measures. The impact of the crisis event disrupts the person's homeostatic balance and places them in a vulnerable state (Golan, 1978). This vulnerability and lack of resolution creates tension due to frustration within the individual and individual becomes upset. Within this upset state there is often a feeling of "helplessness and ineffectuality in the face of the insoluble problem, and this is associated with some disorganization of

functioning, so that the person appears less effective than he usually is" (Caplan, 1964, p.40). It is at this point that the individual has entered a crisis state and the individual perceives the event as having changed their current life situation (Brock et al., 2001).

Following the resolution of the crisis, the individual will have established a new equilibrium to which they now resort back to using along with their previous and possibly adapted habitual mechanism and reactions. Dependent upon how the individual coped and worked through the crisis, added to their previous repertoire of coping mechanisms are new problem-solving responses. These responses may be socially acceptable or unacceptable dependent upon the handling of the crisis situation (Caplan, 1964). In the end, it is these crisis events that redefine how we perceive the world and our place in it (Brock et al, 2001).

Although Lindemann and Caplan's work was the underlying basis of current crisis theory, there has been some questioning of the essential ideas. Taplin (1971) recognized the medical respect Caplan's idea of homeostasis has earned because of its basis in physiology, but fails to see the analogy between an increase in hormones and new set of strategies to be used to problem solve. The field of psychology also criticizes crisis theory because it limits "psychological man to the status of reactor… and it cannot effectively characterize essential sections of human behavior such as growth, development, change, and actualization" (Taplin, 1971, p. 14).

Looking at crisis from a somewhat different angle, Slaiku (1990) revealed Taplin's examination of crisis from a cognitive perspective and suggested that it is how a person perceives the crisis event that will make the situation critical. The person's perception is

based on their cognitive framework. This cognitive framework, or set of expectancies about life, will allow one to understand what the event means to the person. Senge (2000) described this as one's mental model, which explains how two people would explain, describe, or react to a situation differently. The reaction to the situation will depend on the meaning the person places upon it (Slaiku, 1990). Roberts (1990) added to the cognitive perspective by emphasizing that a crisis is not the actual situation; it is instead the person's perception and response to the situation. He breaks the response down into specifying the two conditions that are necessary to have a crisis state: "(a) the individual's perception that the stressful event will lead to considerable upset and/or disruption; and (b) the individual's inability to resolve the disruptions by previously used coping methods" (Roberts, 1990, pp. 8-9).

Crisis theory stemmed from Lindemann and Caplan's work to provide mental health assistance to those who experienced crisis situations. Crisis theory recognized the state of disorganization and ineffectiveness people encounter while enduring a crisis. According to Caplan (1964), it is during a state of crisis that people will employ previously accumulated habitual mechanism and reactions as a means of returning to a state of equilibrium or homeostasis. When the crisis is unrecognizable in stature, it will incapacitate the individual's mechanism and reactions to work, thus the person remains in a state of crisis until a new method of working through the situation is devised. Adding cognitive perspective to the theory, suggests that it is how the person perceives the event that determines how the person reacts. Whether it is a means of returning to homeostasis or one's perception of the event, it is known that a person's ability to respond effectively

and in an organized manner is compromised under both perspectives. Caplan's idea of homeostasis recognizes a change in the person's repertoire of dealing with further situations of similar stature. Along the same line, following a crisis situation, a person's cognitive framework will have changed to include future situations of similar scenarios.

The media coverage of crisis events has provoked recognition for the need of increased safety measures within schools. In a crisis situation, how one reacts and ultimately handles the situation depends on their habitual mechanism and reactions and/or their conceptual framework based on previously lived experiences. Although most educators have not lived through a major crisis occurring in a school location, many recognize the possibility of a situation occurring based on the wide media coverage of school violence. With the display of violent images on television, Internet, in newspapers and magazines at a national level, the media has also heightened the awareness and fear of the unexpected crisis event in many students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Many teachers and students are now extremely fearful when they enter a school building (Kramen, Massey, & Timm, 1999, p. 1).

Krop, Algre, and Williams (1969) stated that many studies reported that stress facilitates, impairs, and has no effect on the cognitive activities and behavioral responses of individuals. They also found that in situations of heightened stress, one's divergent thinking abilities are inhibited. This raises the possibility that other intellectual abilities are also compromised in these situations.

Nicoletti and Spencer-Thomas (2002) described the role of a teacher who is trained to de-escalate or interrupt a violent situation as a protector. The protector builds insulation

around possible victims and comes between potential perpetrators and their ability to commit violence. A vast majority of teachers did not pursue the field of teaching with the intention of one day becoming a protector or with the expectation of helping students respond in the face of tragedy.

As the protector in a crisis situation, understanding the difference between action and reaction to the situation can possibly make all of the difference. "Action is always faster than reaction" (Nicoletti & Spencer-Thomas, 2002, p. 134). Although acting according to the plan is often difficult in times of crisis, it gives the individual opportunity for survival and a greater hand in the situation. Slaiku (1990) explained that while in a crisis situation an individual will experience feelings of exhaustion, inadequacy, helplessness, confusion and anxiety. Within these all encompassing experiential possibilities also exists the specific reaction tendencies of humans while in crisis situations. Understanding human reactions to crisis along with an action plan places individuals in a different place than just being in survival mode. The reactions vary among individuals and are often dependent upon previous experiences with stressful or crisis situations (Nicolleti & Spencer-Thomas, 2002).

Response to Crisis

The following four domains: emotional, physiological, cognitive and behavioral, represent the responses humans experience while enduring crisis situations. Emotions rise from a person's cognitive appraisal of a situation. The appraisal is performed in reference to the situation's meaning for one's well being (Pham, 2007). When an individual experiences a crisis situation, they recognize that their well being is

compromised; the individual enters an intense emotional state. This intense emotional state is then accompanied by high levels of autonomic arousal (Pham, 2007). The autonomic nervous system is a regulatory structure that helps people adapt to changes in their environment. It adjusts or modifies some functions in response to stress (American Heart Association, 2010). The elevated level of autonomic arousal influences the reasoning processes, one's logical rationality, and also impairs one's memory.

As an individual experiences a crisis and the autonomic system is activated, the obvious outward emotional reactions one might expect to experience are often blunted or even non-existent. The emotional expectations are covered by the body's physical reaction involved with trying to escape from danger (Peterson & Straub, 1992). When emotional responses are experienced they include intense fear, anxiety, irritability, disbelief, denial, and frustration (Johnson, 2000).

While in a crisis situation, an individual will experience a range of physical responses. The initial physical response to a crisis situation is often the inability to move. This immobilization is the result of shock to the situation unfolding before and around the individual. Once and if physical movement is regained, the person is then thrust into fight-or-flight responses (Peterson & Straub, 1992). As the mind begins to adjust to the situation occurring, a further physical response experienced includes the loss of fine motor skills. Tasks, that under normal circumstances are relatively easy to perform, become difficult because the inability to use one's fingers. Behaviors such as dialing a phone, using keys to lock or unlock doors, or pushing buttons to activate an alarm

system, become compromised during extremely stressful situations (Nicolette & Spencer-Thomas, 2002).

In conjunction with the depreciation in one's abilities to work with their fine motor skills, individuals may also experience nausea, rapid breathing, heart palpitations, cramps and faintness (Johnson, 2000). These symptoms occur as one's body prepares for danger and adrenaline enters the body's system. If held under these circumstances for long enough, the body will begin to physically exhaust itself and turn toward emotional responses (Peterson & Straub, 1992).

In the event of a crisis situation, often one's ability to think and process information becomes compromised. Problems that would otherwise be simple to work through often become unsolvable and time consuming. In these situations, one's perceptions of reality changes and during the incident, time may slow down or speed up, and a person's ability to prioritize needs or actions becomes difficult (Johnson, 2000). Under extreme stress, the brain switches to a different form of information processing called cerebral acceleration. When this occurs, the brain is processing a large amount of information very quickly so that the best possible decisions can be made. The rapid pace of information processing causes the individual to perceive the world around them in a very slow-moving pace. During this slow-motion state, individuals attempt to anticipate what will occur next. It is also during this mode that a person's environment will become distorted and they become confused about what they actually see and what they are anticipating (Nicoletti & Spencer-Thomas, 2002).

Along with the difficulties of information processing, tunnel thinking, and perception, one may also experience anomia, which occurs when a person has a problem with word finding (Johnson, 2000). This impaired recollection of words is not in conjunction with an impairment of comprehension or the capacity to repeat the words (MedicineNet.com, 2010). The individual may know what they want to say, but the words needed to express the thoughts are not found.

Also, often experienced is dissociation. This term refers to the act of separating or the state of being separated. In psychology and psychiatry, this is a perceived detachment of the mind from the emotional state or even from the body. Dissociation is characterized be a sense of the word as a dreamlike or unreal place (MedicineNet.com, 2010).

Like the other human responses to crisis situations, behavioral responses vary among individuals. In a crisis situation, an individual may respond by entering a state of hysteria. During a crisis situation, the person may scream, cry, panic, and experience uncontrolled body movement. The opposite of this experience occurs when an individual reacts slowly with little expressiveness and general dejection (Johnson, 2000). Caplan (1964) referred to these initial behavioral responses to a threatening situation as outcry, which in addition to the above reflexive behavioral responses includes fainting and moaning. The initial outcry varies for individuals and may be experienced as a lump in the throat for one person or the welling of tears in the eyes for another.

During a crisis situation the individual has difficulty managing the subjective aspects of the situation, which include human responses (Caplan, 1964). Understanding these

human responses give those involved greater abilities to protect, defend and survive in crisis situations (Nicoletti & Spencer-Thomas, 2002).

It is the understanding of these responses that is the first step to becoming equipped with survival strategies. It is also important to recognize any changes or consistencies in the actual occurrence of the situations over time. American families are more aware of the risks involved in educating students.

History of Violent Behaviors

More recent studies from researchers Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) believe that the potential for violent behavior is inherent in the chemical makeup of the human body. Miller (1996) stated that violence is an inborn trait, which leads people toward aggressive behavior. Other researchers believe that violent behavior is learned from family members, neighborhood environment, and peer groups (Loeber, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986). According to the Constitutional Rights Foundation (2007), 43% of students believed that violence is learned from parents. Researchers like Weis (1989) and Farrington (1978) argued that violent behavior is the result of negative social forces such as poverty and a lack of economic opportunity. Researchers like Fromm (1973) said that violence was not a part of human nature, nor was it common to all people. Fromm added that the general population preferred to believe that violence is completely instinctive because such thoughts negated the need to consider how social problems have contributed to an increase in violence.

Hyman, Zelikoff, and Clarke (1988) suggested that when people are experiencing stress they are often more likely to be aggressive, angry, and irritable; these feelings contribute

to violent behaviors in the community. Some common factors, which may cause stress, relate to employment, unemployment, relationships, studying, and chronic illnesses. There are different types of stress and each has its own symptoms. Denenberg, Denenberg, and Braverman (1998) stated, "Violence is a human response to stress. Even normal people can react violently when stress becomes unbearable" (p. 31). The form of stress that Denenberg, Denberg, and Braverman (1998) referred to is chronic stress, which is the stress that comes from living in a society, plagued by never-ending troubles. It is the chronic stress that can lead to violence or to suicide along with strokes or heart attacks. It is easy to identify with some forms of aggressive behaviors; however, it is knowing when to control the anger so as not to do psychological or bodily harm (Ainsenber & Ell, 2005).

Developmental Psychology is another area that has been used as a tool to explain why violence may occur. A theory that has evolved from developmental theorists suggested that early trauma, infant-child attachment, intrauterine growth, and other influences play a major part in brain development. It is thought that abuse is an ingredient that could lead a child to act violently. According to Buchanan (1996), 30-40 % of children who suffer abuse or neglect go on to abuse or neglect their own children. Buchanan (1996) also stated that these victims are most likely to grow up and perpetrate domestic violence, to commit violent crimes, and to suffer mental health.

Poverty is also considered a major factor in violence. Researchers have debated the definition of poverty because an agreement cannot be reached on how to apply the label of poverty stricken "Causes and Effects of Poverty," 2000. A definition of relative

poverty, which is preferred by sociologists, is the following; "the poor are those who lack what is needed by most Americans to live decently because they earn less than half of the nation's median income" ("Causes and Effects of Poverty." p. 1). By this standard around 20% of U.S. citizens live in poverty, and this has been the case for at least the past 40 years ("Causes and Effects of Poverty," 2000).

According to the American Psychological Association (1993), violence is most prevalent among the poor, regardless of race. Health U.S.A. (1998) said that in 1996, one out of every five children in the United States (14.5 million) lived in poverty. In 2003, the U.S. poverty rate for all individuals was 12.5%, children under 18 poverty rate was 17.6 %, and children under 6 the poverty rate was 20.3%, up more than 2% in 2 years (United States Census Bureau, 2004). It is believed that poor people are segregated from the mainstream of American society and many see little opportunity to obtain the basic necessities of life (American Psychological Association, 1993). In fact, Lang (1998) suggested that children who see themselves as being poor feel that they are left out of the mainstream, which could lead to feelings of shame and such shame, could lead to violence. Researchers from different fields have repeatedly established that poverty and its contextual life circumstances are major determinants of violence (American Psychological Association, 1993).

Antisocial Behavior

Antisocial behavior, which involves recurring violations of socially prescribed patterns of behavior such as aggression, hostility, defiance and destructiveness (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). Several gunmen in history have been diagnosed as having

antisocial behavior such as Seung-Hui, Harris and Klebold (Canady, 2005). One such gunman (Cho Seung-Hui) killed a student and an adult advisor in a dormitory at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Canady, 2005). He then express-mailed a multimedia suicide message to a major television network, armed himself with a second weapon and hundreds of rounds of ammunition, and crossed the Institute's campus to kill an additional 30 students and faculty and wound 15 others in classrooms before taking his own life (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2007). Prior to this violent act, Seung-Hui was detained by campus police because of some disturbing writings and was evaluated by a county psychiatrist where he was assessed as mentally ill but not considered an immanent threat. Shortly after his release, Seung-Hui, like Harris and Klebold, began to make elaborate plans for his attack (Canady, 2005).

Kazadin (1993) stated there were between 4 and 6 million children in school that had been identified as antisocial, and the numbers were increasing. According to Walker, Horner, Sugai, Bullis, Sprague, Bricker and Kaufran (1996), antisocial children and youth are at serious risk for negative outcomes such as, school dropout, vocational maladjustment, drug and alcohol abuse, relationship problems, and higher hospitalization, and mortality rates. Prior to his violent act, Seung-Hui was detained by campus police because of some disturbing writings and was evaluated by a county psychiatrist where he was assessed as mentally ill but not considered an immanent threat. Shortly after his release, Seung-Hui, like Harris and Klebold, began to make elaborate plans for his attack (Canady, 2005).

Literature

School violence is defined in different ways. According to Hampton, Jenkins, and Gullota (1996), violence is not isolated to a particular community or part of the population; rather it is multidimensional and pervasive. School violence has been associated with the destruction of school property, aggressive physical contact and assault with weapons (Rintoul, 1999). Capozzoli and McVey (2000), defined school violence as any act of intimidation, threats, harassment, robbery, vandalism, physical assaults with or without a weapon, or murder that happens at school or on buses going to and from school. Capozzoli and McVey (2000) categorized school violence into three categories based on the starting point of the conflict and the location where it occurred:

> Type 1:Violence that originated at school occurs at school. A situation at school develops to cause a student to feel that he or she is a victim of unfair treatment. The student then seeks to exact vengeance upon or obtain retribution from the antagonist and/or make an example of them.
>
> Type 2: Violence originated in the school but occurs outside the school. A situation develops in the school but the perpetrator does not choose to exact retribution or vengeance at school but chooses another location.
>
> Type 3: Violence originated outside the school and occurs in the school such as a bomb threat or a former student returning to kill his girlfriend. (p. 22)

School violence once considered to affect only inner-city areas because of gangs and drugs, now has spread across rural and suburban America. MacDonald (1996) provided definitions of school violence from educators and students perspectives. "From an

educator's perspective, school violence encompasses those behaviors that seriously disrupt a classroom or school" (p. 83) and for students, "school violence is anything that makes us afraid to come to and stay at school" (p. 83).

School related deaths have occurred since the beginning of compulsory education in the United States, whether from accidents, natural disasters, or schoolyard fights gone too far. "Violence in the United States has reached epidemic proportions, with a predictable spillover into public schools" (Yell & Rozalski, 2000, p. 1). According to Furlong and Morrison (2000), violence is increasingly affecting American society in general and specifically, America's children and adolescents, who comprise the majority of the victims. School violence has prompted numerous public and private entities to produce national reports examining violence in America's school system (Hellman & Beaton, 1986).

School violence is not a new phenomenon; it has appeared throughout history. School violence is also a problem other countries have struggled with over the years (Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, 2007). Prior to the 1950s, school violence was of little concern to school officials. A 1949 survey of high school principals found no difficulty with either student violence or destruction of property (Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999). However, a study conducted in 1956 by the National Education Association found that violence is becoming more of a concern within the schools (Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999). According to Ebaugh (2007), in 1958 the deadliest act of school violence occurred when a fourth grader set fire at a Chicago Catholic School that killed 95 people.

Conditions became more volatile in the 1960s due in part to the violence sparked by segregation and the Civil Rights movement. Following racial integration within the school systems, racially motivated violence increasingly came to the attention of the media, and was considered by many to be a direct cause for the increase in school crime for that time period (Warner, Weisst, & Krulak, 1999). In spite of the increase in violence, Hill and Drolet (1999) reported that in the 1960s school violence data was not collected on a consistent basis and school administration, staff and students were not officially asked to report physical attacks or crimes.

"In the early and mid-1970s, school violence and vandalism began gaining public attention" (Hill & Drolet, 1999, p. 264). A report released in 1974 by the National Association of School Security Directors stated that over 200,000 physical assaults occurred in schools nationwide. Additionally, the report indicated that there had been a steady increase in teacher assaults since 1955 (Hill & Drolet, 1999). Due to increase in school crime, a Safe School Study, a major school crime study, was released in 1978. According to the report, almost 10% of America's schools experienced problems with crime and violence, and nearly 3 million secondary students were reportedly fearful of their safety and avoided certain places on or near school grounds. In addition, teachers were reportedly being attacked every month (Menacker & Weldon, 1990). As time progressed, there were found to be increases in weapon carrying, attempted rape, drug use and dropouts as well (Warner et al., 1999). The National Institute of Education study, *Violent Schools-Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report to Congress*, marked the formal recognition of a serious national concern with the increasingly crime ridden,

unsafe conditions of American public schools (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978). Among the statistics reported at that time were the 40% of robberies and 36% of assaults on urban youth occurred in school; approximately fifty-two hundred teachers were physically assaulted in a typical month. In addition, the report stated that students were afraid at school. The report indicated that 29% of victims of school violence said that they occasionally brought weapons to school, whereas only 9% of non-victimized students admitted to bringing a weapon to school.

Responding to the government reports of rising juvenile crime rates and the infiltration of crime into the nation's public school system, the School Resource Officer Program received its first national recognition in 1973 (Trump, 1998). The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals recommended that all law enforcement agencies provide at least one annual presentation to every grade level in their jurisdiction related to the law enforcement officer's role in society. The commission also recommended that every city with over a four hundred police department force should assign a full-time officer to each junior and senior high school. Many school districts throughout the county received special legislation to create their own police departments operating under the direction of the school district rather than local police or sheriff departments as previous School Resource Officer Programs had done (Trump, 1998).

The early 1970s witnessed the first comprehensive study of school crime, which was conducted by the National Institute of Education. A conclusion from this study was that adolescents were at a greater risk of becoming victims of violence while at school than

when away from school. A study in the late 1980s found that 91,000 if the nation's teachers, or almost 4%, were attacked physically in that year by students (Gaustad, 1991). In addition research conducted during this time period revealed that 34% of a nationwide sample of eighth and tenth graders reported that they were robbed, threatened, or attacked while at school or on a school bus (Greenbaum, 1989).

During the 1980s, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey was initiated. The survey linked youth violence and crime to school violence and crime (Furlong & Morrison, 2000). A 1990 National Crime Survey Report of the continuing major school crime study of the 1980s found that although the school-age population has declined significantly since 1982, the number of violent crimes in and around schools remained high, ranging from a low of about 420,000 in 1982 to a high of almost 456,000 in 1987 (Menacker & Weldon, 1990).

The number of juveniles committing murder with guns, especially handguns, quadrupled during this period (Cunningham, Henggeler, Limber, Melton, & Nation, 2000). It is illuminating to note that "overall, the 1980s witnessed a 79% increase in the number of juveniles ages 10 to 17 who committed murder with guns" (Cunningham et al., 2000, p. 432). Research also found that 90% of all schools had no known felony crimes during this time period (Furlong & Morrison, 2000).

"It was not until 1992 that the label 'school violence' was used widely as a term to describe violent and aggressive acts on school campuses" (Furlong & Morrison, 2000, p. 1). During the 1990s, numerous incidents of school violence occurred. Some cases made national headlines, while others remained known primarily to local communities and

researchers. A 1993 survey conducted by the National School Board Association of "2,000 urban, suburban, and rural schools in the United States revealed that the majority of districts reported that school violence had increased over the 5 years prior to the study" (Warner et al., 1999, p. 55). In 1994, the Safe Schools Act was passed by Congress, which enabled crime-ridden schools to apply for federal grants to increase the safety of the schools (Stefkovich & Miller, 1999). The grants received could be used for metal detectors and school security. According to Hill and Drolet (1999), "School districts are the largest purchasers of metal detectors in the United States" (p. 267).

"Violence is a public health and safety condition which results from individual, socioeconomic, political, and institutional disregard for basic human needs. Violence includes physical and nonphysical harm, which causes damage, pain, injury, and fear. Violence disrupts the school environment and results in the debilitation of per personal development, which may lead to hopelessness and helplessness" (Dear, Scott, & Marshall, 1994, p. 4).

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2010) expanded the definition of violence to include acts of severe violence. These acts now include assault with a deadly weapon, forcible robbery, rape, and homicide. "The juvenile crime problem is serious. Juvenile offenders are over-represented in arrests, not only for index crimes, but for crimes in general" (Shoemaker, 1990, p. 72).

According to Butts and Travis (2002), in the early 1990s, Americans faced frightening predictions about an approaching storm of juvenile violence. Popular terms from the early 1990s included, "juvenile super predator," (p. 12) "coming blood bath." (p. 12) and

"crime time bomb," (p. 12) indicating that America was heading toward and unavoidable collision with a growing generation of violent youth.

Crime in the United States is reported using the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Violent Crime Index, often referred to as index crimes. These crimes include murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (Federal Bureau Of Investigation [FBI], 2008). The number of juvenile arrests for violent index offenses grew 64 % between 1980 and 1994. Juvenile arrests for murder increased 99% during the same fourteen-year time period. The juvenile arrest rate for murder increased 167% between 1984 and 1993 alone, from a rate of five arrests per 100,000 juveniles to 14 per 100,000 (Fox, 1996). These increases captured the attention of the nation, media and policymakers. States reacted by passing juvenile justice reform initiatives, often resulting in reduced judicial discretion and a greater use of the adult courts for juvenile offenders (Kratcoski, 1996).

Predicting violent crime trends is not an exact science. The U. S. Census Bureau (1993) predicted that the juvenile population would grow more than 20% over the next two decades. However, the population of ten to seventeen-year-olds in the U.S. population exceeded 31 million. Violent crime for this age group fell for six straight years from 1994 to 2000 (Butts & Travis, 2002). According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2008), the rate of juvenile violent crime decreased by almost 16% from 1999-2008.

One reason for the fall in crime rates in the late 1990s was because of the decline in crimes committed by young people being reported (Kratcoski, 1996). This compounded during the 1970s and 1980s and was attributed to the arrival of crack cocaine and the

soliciting of younger students by drug pushers and dealers. Its use spread rapidly creating a new industry for drug pushers and dealers, many of who were in the nation's schools. In response to the rise of crack cocaine and its penetration into the public school, former First Lady Nancy Reagan became the spokesperson for the "Just Say No" campaign. The Los Angeles Police Department and school district teamed up to create the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) (2010) program, which spread rapidly across the nation. The program continues to focus on education elementary and middle school aged students on the dangers of drug use (Simonsen, 1991).

The crime rates that are in decline are those reported in the FBI (2008) Violent Crime Index. The crimes reported in the index include homicide, aggravated assault, armed robbery and forcible rape. The crimes reported by local police departments to the FBI (2008) are those published in their yearly reports. Many of the crimes committed on school campuses go unreported, and those that are reported to school officials are often not reported to police (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995). While data supports the decline of juveniles in criminal acts, as tracked by the crime index, school violence still remains a concern. Conventional wisdom holds that school violence is a reflection of violence in a broader social context. Violence is imported into a school by the student and by intruders from the neighborhood surrounding the school (Reiss & Roth, 1993).

Violence in schools occurs daily. When violent acts occur, educators and students are directly affected because school effectiveness is reduced and student learning is inhibited. Unsafe school environments expose students who may already be at risk for school failure to physical and emotional harm. Educators, parents, policymakers and law-

enforcement agencies have voiced growing concerns over violent behavior that is exhibited at school across the nation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

Interpersonal disputes are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal violence on school campuses (Eadel & Follman, 1993). The most common forms of reported violence in schools involve assaults without the use of a weapon. In a National Center for Education Statistics (2009) survey, students ages 12-18 were victims of about 1.5 million nonfatal crimes while they were at school, compared to 1.1 million nonfatal crimes while they were away from school. In 2007, the rates for theft and violent crime were higher at school than away from school. Students were victims of 31 thefts per 1,000 students at school compared to 21 thefts per 1,000 students away from school. In the National Center for Education Statistics (2009) survey, principals reported that physical conflicts among students were a moderate to serious discipline problem in 14% of rural schools and 25% of city schools. In spite of the principal reports, school-associated violent deaths are rare. The National School Safety Center (2010) reported a total of 468 school-associated deaths from 21 September 1992, through 20 April 2010. The National School Safety Center (2010) data reflects killings of and by adults on school campuses, going to and from school and at athletic events. The three most frequent reasons for school-associated deaths were: "(1) unknown, (2) interpersonal disputes and (3) suicide" (p.47). Three hundred forty-eight of the deaths that occurred were caused by shootings (National School Safety Center, 2010).

While the data showed that youth violence and school-related violent incidents were on the decline, they still happen. Unfortunately, no one can predict what student will

commit an act of violence. In a 1999 report, the U.S. Secret Service analyzed 37 school shootings. The agency found no typical profile of a child who commits violence; however the following elements were recurrent themes in the analysis:

- The attackers had planned their attacks, told others of their grievances, and often gave details about their plans.
- Two-thirds of the attackers felt bullied, persecuted, or threatened.
- More than half had a history of feeling extremely depressed or desperate.

More than three-fourths had difficulty coping with a major change in a significant relationship or loss of status, such as a lost love or a humiliating failure (U.S. Secret Service, 1999, p. 70). While the U.S. Secret Service (1999) may not be able to "profile" a school shooter or a student with a propensity to commit an act of violence, there are a number of inherent factors that must be taken into consideration.

Media and Violence

Television is an enormous presence in the daily lives of children. Television viewing takes place in the average American home approximately seven hours per day. Children entering kindergarten have viewed approximately four thousand hours of television (Levin, 1998). The Television Bureau of Advertising (2010) found that children between the ages of two and eleven viewed two hours and fifty-seven minutes of television per day, or approximately eleven hundred hours per year (Woodard, 1999). Children between the ages of ten and seventeen watch slightly less television, about two hours and thirty minutes per day, or one thousand hours per year. By comparison, most children spend approximately one thousand hours in school each year (Panzer, 2001). Spending

so much time watching television removes children from social, intellectual, and physical growth activities through play, group activities, reading, and sports (Kettl & Fisher, 2001).

According to Kroll (1993), by the time a child finishes elementary school, he or she has witnessed more than one hundred thousand acts of violence and eight thousand homicides in the name of entertainment. *TV Guide* conducted an eighteen-hour survey on ten channels, which revealed 1,846 acts of violence in 175 scenes of television drama (Hickey, 1992). Poor conflict resolution is one of the major themes of violent television. Problems are often solved rapidly and violently, and violent or antisocial behaviors go punished. The "good guys" in violent television are often no more appropriate role models for young children than the villains themselves (Kalin, 1997). Children's exposure to television violence is rampant. Since violence is a complex behavior with many variables, when the many variables come together in a susceptible individual, the results are a violent act. For those individuals predisposed to violent behavior for biological, psychological or societal reasons, violent television can make these impulses react (Kettl & Fisher, 2001). "Exposing children already predisposed to violence to violent entertainment is like pouring kerosene on a fire" (Kroll, 1993, p. 28).

A surge of information has become available to kids via the Internet or home computers on topics such as "bomb building," "Heavy Firepower: Turning Junk into Arsenal Weaponry," "making a working weapon out of surplus and scrap hardware," and "obtaining explosives" (National School Safety Center, 2010,p.2). Eric Harris, one of the Columbine High School shooters, posted death threats against one of his classmates on

his personal website (Panzer, 2001). As with all people who spend a large amount of time on the Internet, children experience limited or decreased "real" or face-to-face communication with family members and a decline in the number of people in their social circle.

The Internet is not edited; therefore, violent images, sexually violent images, pornography and terrorist information are readily available. "Chat rooms," Internet sites that allow computer users to type messages to others on the same site, give children access to literally thousands of other children who may be considering violence. Chat rooms have been known to be support groups for children and adolescents who are encouraged to act out fantasies of violence.

Studies do not clearly demonstrate that the Internet is systematically linked to violence in children and adolescents. There are cases, such as the Columbine High School shooting and the Springfield, Oregon, school shooting, where it is clear that the shooters

shooting and the Springfield, Oregon, school shooting, where it is clear that the shooters obtained information on bomb making and displayed their violent thoughts on the Internet (Panzer, 2001). As with television, the Internet has become a vehicle for those children predisposed to violence to gather the information necessary to act out their violence.

Video games have been a part of youth since the introduction of "Pong" in the early 1970s (Kalin, 1997). Since that time, video games have evolved into an interactive, complex and violent form of entertainment. Some video games on the market today allow children to practice shooting guns or to chase down women in simulated violent action. Points are gained in these games for shooting or killing fantasy opponents. The winner is the one who "kills" the most people and earns the most points (Panzer, 2001).

A 1995 study on male college students found that those who played a violent video game had a higher heart reactivity rate and higher measures of hostility than those who played billiards for the same amount of time. Those who played the more violent version of the video game had an even higher heart rate and scored highest on hostility measures (Ballard, 1995).

Following the play of violent video games, children display increased arousal, aggression, hostility, activity levels and antisocial behavior (Bailey, 2000). Children playing a violent video game attributed more negative motivations to characters in stories read to them than children playing nonviolent video games (Kirsch, 1997). Violent video games such as "Doom" or "Quake" are being used by the military to improve "fire rates," defined as the rate soldiers pull the trigger during a battle situation. It is feared that violent video games teach children to enjoy the experience of killing and reward them with points for doing so (Quittner, 1999).

Gangs

Gangs have existed in the United States since the nineteenth century, although at that time, their activities were limited (Elliot, Hamburg, & Williams, 2001). Today, gangs exist all across the nation and are no longer just a big city problem. Many communities and neighborhoods, once untouched by crime and violence, are now threatened by gang violence (McWhirter, 1993). Today's gangs are better organized, much more mobile, remain active for longer periods, and have unprecedented access to sophisticated weapons (Stephens, 1994).

Gang activity, once thought to be an inner-city problem, is increasingly being carried into the schools. In a study of youth gangs in Cleveland, Ohio, Denver, Colorado, and south Florida, it was reported that half of the respondents acknowledged that members of their gangs had assaulted teachers, 70% admitted that their gangs assaulted students, and more than 80% claimed that gang members sold drugs at school (Elliot, Hamburg, & Williams, 2001). Gangs no longer view the school as a "neutral zone" where gang activity ceases. Instead, schools have become the ideal location to victimize others (Parks, 1997).

The composition of gang membership has also undergone some changes. Gang membership that was once limited to adolescents and young adults is now open to elementary school children. While these gangs take on more of a "mini-gang" appearance, with less violent acts, it is a beginning point into violence for many children (Boozer, 1989).

On a national level, more than half of teachers (54%) with a majority of minority students in their classrooms believe that gang membership or peer pressure are major factors contributing to violence in their school (Donohue, Schiraldi, & Ziedenber, 1999; Duhon-Sells, 1995). Over half of law enforcement officials (59%) and a third of secondary school students (34%) also believe that gang membership or peer pressure are major contributing factors to violence in America's schools (Donohue, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 1999; Duhon-Sells, 1995). Gangs are no longer mostly comprised of ethnic minorities. Students involved in gangs cross all ethnic, racial, cultural, geographic and socioeconomic lines (Boozer, 1989).

Weapons

The prevalence of guns in American society cannot be overlooked as a societal factor that could lead to violence. Between 1987 and 1994, gun carrying at school increased 138% in central Texas alone. In California, the number of guns confiscated doubled between 1985 and 1988 (Elliot, Hamburg, & Williams, 2001). Gunshot wounds are the leading cause of death among teenage boys in America (Conway, 1996). Firearm deaths and injuries among America's schoolchildren rose 137% from 1962 to 1993 (Kettl & Fisher, 2001).

In America's middle and high schools, guns are a constant presence (Bailey, 2000). A survey of more than two thousand middle school students revealed 3% carried a gun to school at some point (Duhon-Sells, 1995). According to Bailey (2000), students who carried guns to school were more likely to use drugs and alcohol, two substances known to aggravate those with a propensity for violent acts.

Fighting

Fights have always been present on school campuses. However, the presence of guns in school changes the dynamics of the social situation. A survey of 289 middle school students in 1991 showed that weapons were present in 43% of the fights (Malek, Chang, & Davis, 1998). In a study of 567 seventh graders, 34% had been involved in a fight at least once. The study revealed that those students who fought and observed fights were more likely to carry a weapon. This same conclusion was reached in a similar study of 289 seventh grade students and a more comprehensive study of ten thousand adolescents ages 12 through 21 (Lowry, Powell, & Kann, 1998). The mere presence of guns and other weapons may encourage students to fight and lead to more serious injuries (Lowry, Powell, & Kann, 1998; Malek, Chang, & Davis, 1998). The prevalence of guns in homes, on the streets and in our schools is a deadly risk factor that has spread and endangers America's children (Kettl & Fisher, 2001).

Children face many different types of violence in society; however, the two major types of violence that children encounter at school are fighting and bullying. For families it has always been the belief that schools were a safe place for children to learn (Bluestein, 2001).

Times have changed and so has the safety of children in school systems (Capozzoli & McVey, 2000). The United States Department of Education (2002) suggested that

12% of 12 through 18-year-old students reported experiencing forms of victimization at school. In a 2001 survey of high school students, it was reported that 17.4% had carried a weapon to school during the 30 days prior to the survey. In addition, The United States Department of Education (2002) reported that 57% of expulsions involved high school students for bringing firearms to school, 33% involved junior/middle school students and 100% involved elementary school students.

Fighting is another type of violence observed in the school setting. There are many different reasons why a fight starts, but usually it is because of a disagreement (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1989). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1989), most fights that students encountered were with acquaintances such as the following:
family members, friends, and romantic dates. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (1989) estimated 18 physical fighting incidents occurred per 100 students per month. However, the incidence of physical fighting was four times higher for male students (28 incidents per 100 students) than for female students (seven incidents per 100). The incidents were highest for Black male students (47 incidents per 100), followed by Hispanic male students (35 incidents per 100) and White male students (22 incidents per 100).

According to Lines (2006), there are stages that happen when students fight. The first stage can start with behaviors such as pushing, shoving, tripping, tackling, name-calling or teasing; these are some of the actions that could cause the friction between two or more students. The next stage can occur quickly; it takes place when a crowd gathers and a rush of children move from one place to another. The result of all three stages is that the fight stops and the teacher arrives or the teacher arrives and the fight stops. In the end

come the consequences, in which the students receive some form of discipline and an on-going record is kept of their confrontation. Research has shown that physical attacks or fights without a weapon are the most common incidents, occurring in 64% of all public schools (Devoe, Peter, Noonan, Snyder, & Baum, 2006).

Bullying

Bullying is defined as threats or intimidation; verbal cursing, teasing and physical attacks (Newman, Holden, & Delville, 2005). It is a common experience for many children and adolescents. School bullying is perhaps the most severely underrated problem within an educational system (Quiroz, Arette, & Stephans, 2006). Research indicated that 15 to 20% of all students are victimized by bullies at some point in their school experience (Shore, 2005). Nationwide, almost one in three children is involved in bullying either as a bully or as a victim (Shore, 2005). Studies have demonstrated that students who were bullied are more likely to be involved in physical fights (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

According to Slonje and Smith (2008), there are several types of bullying such as the following:

Physical- hitting, tripping, shoving;

Verbal- name-calling, taunts, teasing;

Psychological- excluding, rumor, gossip, bossing, threatening;

Sexual orientation- ostracism based on gender preference;

Sexual harassment- taunts, touching, coercion, offensive sexual comments; and

Cyber bullying- harassment through Internet, e-mail, cell phone.

Bullying has been characterized as a specific form of repetitive violence (Jacobs, 2008). The exact reasons that students engage in bullying behaviors is unclear; the literature on bullying suggests that several factors influence bullying behavior, including the desire to be accepted, family dynamics such as parental involvement and student's views of themselves (Olthol & Gossens, 2008). When comparing the sexes against each other, there were some differences that developed. Boys were more likely than girls to report being victims of bullying (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Graham, Bellmore, & Mize, 2006); whereas, girls were more likely than boys to report suicidal thoughts and plans (Park, Schep, Jang, & Koo, 2006).

Research shows that school bullying has both immediate and long-term detrimental effects. Researchers suggested that victimization due to bullying is correlated with student absenteeism, poorer academic achievement, social isolation and internalizing problems such as depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, low self-esteem and poorer psychosocial adjustments (Kim, Koy & Leventhal, 2005; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfield, & Gould, 2007; Ling, Fisher, and Lombard, 2006 Olweus, 1994; Poteat & Espelage, 2007). According to Troop-Gordon and Ladd (2005), there is a link between peer victimization and self-esteem, whereby individuals who have been ridiculed by peers internalize negative messages about themselves and are more vulnerable to developing anxiety and depression. Recent studies discovered posttraumatic stress has been linked to prolonged bullying (Eisenberg & Radel, 2005; Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara, & Kernic, 2005).

A longitudinal study conducted by Shore (2005) suggested that many of the negative effects associated with childhood bullying are low self-esteem, depression, and social isolation effects that can last into adulthood. According to a survey conducted by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2001), as many as half of all children are bullied at some time during their school year and at least 10% are bullied on a regular basis. Bullying behaviors can be either physical intimidation or threats regardless of the gender of their victims, whereas girls are more often verbal usually with another girl as the target. Children who are bullied can suffer from social and emotional maldevelopment and it can affect their school performance.

As a result, some victims of bullying have even attempted suicide rather than continue to endure such harassment and punishment (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2001). On the other hand, it has been noted that bullies thrive on controlling or dominating others. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2001), reported that bullies have often been the victims of physical abuse or have been bullied themselves during their lifetime. Negative interactions among students can have an affect on the atmosphere of violence in schools. Olweus (1994) shared the following about a student being bullied or victimized:

> A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another. Negative actions can be carried out by physical contact, by words, or in other ways, such as making faces or obscene gestures, and intentional exclusion from a group. (p. 1173)

In addition, Due et al. (2005) stated that on average, those who are bullied more extensively suffer from numerous and severe symptoms.

Drugs

The issue of violence in schools has generated public concern and directed research for more than two decades (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978). The Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act, PL 91-513, was passed in 1970, which provided for severe penalties for persons found possessing or selling drugs near a school (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2000). A Safe Schools Act was introduced in 1971 to provide funds for the development and implementation of school security plans. The Safe Schools Act was signed into law in 1974.

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan created the National School Safety Center located at Pepperdine University. This center involved a partnership between the United States Department of Education and Justice with the goal of drawing the nation's attention to school crime and drugs, as well as developing solutions to these issues (Stefkovich & O'Brien, 1997).

In 1985 the Supreme Court added to the level of national concern for school safety when it noted in New Jersey v. T.L.O. that "Maintaining order in the classroom has never been easy, but in recent years, school disorder has taken particularly ugly forms: drug use and violent crime have become major social problems" (Menacker & Hurwitz, 1990 p. 68).

Legislation

In an effort to deter people from firing guns in school zones, the Crime Control Act of 1990 (Including Title XVII, the Gun Free School Zones Act) prohibited the possession or discharge of firearms on or within 1,000 feet of private, parochial, or public school grounds. Anyone convicted of such a crime could serve a heavy prison sentence or pay costly fines. Although this act is in effect, no research evidence supports the position that "get tough" policies actually deter violence (Elliot, Hamburg, & Williams, 1998).

On October 20, 1994, the Gun-Free Schools Act was enacted as a part of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, Public Law 103-382. This law mandated that each state receiving federal funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 must require local educational agencies to expel for at least one year any student who brings a weapon to school (Meeks, Heit, & Page, 1995).

The highly publicized school shootings of the 1990s shocked the nation and shattered the stereotypical belief that school violence was a problem confined to impoverished inner-city schools. In response to the growing public concern about safety, many schools implemented "zero-tolerance" security policies that mandated suspension or expulsion for students caught making verbal threats, fighting or carrying weapons on school grounds (Tebo, 2000).

Utah passed legislation to allow members of the general public to carry guns on school property as long as they have permits. As many as 34 states have granted school districts jurisdiction over this issue, Utah never allowed its districts to choose. Utah school districts have had to adjust by making policies to allow guns on campus with the restriction that they are left with teachers at all times (Keller, 2003).

According to the Student Discipline Law Bulletin, there are several recent court cases involving school violence. One such case is Demers vs. Leominister School Department, U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts, No. 00-40082-CBS (2003). This case involved a 15-year-old special needs student in the eighth grade who disciplined for misbehavior. When asked to draw a picture of how he felt about being put out of class, he began to draw his school surrounded with explosives. The picture was turned over to the principal. The next day, this student wrote phrases like "I want to die" and "I hate life." The notes were also taken to the principal's office. When the committee met on this behavior, they agreed to let the student remain in school if he received a psychiatric evaluation, behaved properly, and did his schoolwork. The student refused to get a psychiatric evaluation and was suspended for the remainder of the school year and placed in a 45-day interim alternative educational setting. The student's family sued the school with the argument that the young man's First Amendment right was violated and the he was unconstitutionally disciplined. The judgment was granted to the school (Quinlan, 2003).

In a related case (MAL vs Litchfield Independent School, Court of Appeals of Minnesota, No. C8-02-739) (2002), an 11th-grader brought a rifle to school because he forgot to remove it from his vehicle after a hunting trip. Someone broke into the car and stole the rifle. When his mother notified the assistant principal about the incident, the student was present and admitted having the weapon on campus. In response, the school sent a letter to this student's home to notify him that he was expelled for possession of a weapon on campus. After attending a subsequent hearing, the family was not satisfied

with the results and appealed the expulsion claiming that the school violated the student's right to due process. However, the expulsion was upheld because the student, being aware of the school policy, had a weapon on campus in violation of the policy (Quinlan, 2003).

A 16-year-old high school student threatened to bring a gun to school and "start with the seventh grade and work his way up." When his statement was reported to the principal and assistant principal, they confronted the student, who admitted to saying it. Two days later, the school suspended the boy for 10 days for making violent threats and began expulsion proceedings. After an expulsion hearing, the board recommended that the student be expelled. His parents appealed the ruling (Hofmaier, 2004).

In *Rivera v. Houston Independent School District*, an eighth-grade student was killed during a gang fight. A fellow student stabbed the student with a screwdriver. By the time the teachers came to break up the fight, it was too late. The parents sued the school district for violating their son's constitutional rights by failing to protect him and failing to maintain a safe environment for him. The court ruled that the school district was not liable for the student's death. The family appealed this decision to no avail (Hofmaier, 2004).

Currently, 42 states have passed legislation to improve information sharing between schools and juvenile agencies, and the number continues to increase. The levels of information that can be shared vary greatly from state to state, depending on state laws (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2002).

Despite long-standing attention to the problem, there is a growing perception that not all public schools are safe places of learning, and media reports highlight specific school-based violent acts (Bailey, 2000). The seventh goal of the National Education Goals states that by the year 2000, " all schools in America will be free of drugs and violence and the unauthorized presence of firearms, alcohol and offer a disciplined environment that is conducive to learning" (National Education Goals Panel, 2002, p. 11). In response to this goal, Congress passed the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994, which provides for support of drug and violence prevention programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

In response to congressional legislation, individual states passed a number of statutes to make safe school planning a legal mandate. It is the policy of the Mississippi State Board of Education Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards (2008) that all students enrolled in public schools in Mississippi have the right to safe schools. The State Board affirmed that students could not benefit fully from and educational program unless they attend school regularly in an environment that is free from physical and psychological harm. In order for the local education agency to ensure this right, prevention strategies must be identified and implemented.

The Mississippi Department of Education created the Division of Safe School Safety in 1999 as part of the Office of Safe and Orderly Schools. "The primary mission of the division is to furnish technical assistance, consulting services, information clearing house services and training regarding school safety to all school districts" (Mississippi Department of Education Office of Safe and Orderly Schools and Mississippi Office of Attorney General, 2005, p. 2).

During the 2010 Session of the Mississippi Legislature, Senate Bill 2015 was passed in regards to bullying and harassing behaviors. The bill signed by the governor reads as follows:

> As used in this act, 'bullying or harassing behavior' is any pattern of gestures or written, electronic or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication, or any act reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus, and that: (a.) places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property; or (b) creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits. For purposes of this section, 'hostile environment' means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as bullying or harassing behavior and the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is bullying or harassing behavior. (Senate Bill 2015, 2010)

The existence of a comprehensive school safety plan is a generally accepted standard of school safety plan is a generally accepted standard of school safety as well as a mandatory requirement of Section 37-3-83, Mississippi Code of 1972. Comprehensive school safety planning should be structured to address three primary phases of crisis: (a) Prevention or Planning, (b) Responding or Managing and (c) Recovery or Resolution (Mississippi Department of Education Office of Safe and Orderly Schools and Mississippi Office of Attorney General, 2005). The school safety plan should incorporate the following minimum information:

Policies and procedures that are clearly communicated and consistently enforced to afford a safe school operating environment.

a. Employee Handbook;
b. Parent/Student Handbook;
c. Discipline Code;
d. District Policies and Procedures;
e. Maintenance Policies; and
f. Positive programs and staff training that the school uses to reduce violence.

In accordance with Section 37-11-5, Mississippi Code of 1972, the school safety plan must include crisis response procedures

g. Fire;
h. Tornado;
i. Hurricane;

j. Bomb Threat/Explosion;

k. Intruder (armed and unarmed);

l. Earthquake; and

m. Threats unique to the school such as nuclear accident, hazmat spill, train derailment, if the school is within one mile of a major transportation artery.

This plan must be amended no less than once per year. Each school is required to also have an emergency kit that staff members take upon evacuation, such as grade books, crisis plans, building plans, etc. Along with a crisis response team, each building-level site should train each team how to react to each crisis or disaster event (Mississippi Department of Education Office of Safe and Orderly Schools and Mississippi Office of Attorney General, 2005).

The search for effective youth violence prevention strategies is urgent. Because of universal attendance by American children, schools are a common site for preventive interventions for youth violence (Elliot, Hamburg, & Williams, 2001). While there is an abundance of curriculums, violence prevention consultants and crisis planning seminars in the field, real prevention of violence begins with training teachers (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). The focus of safe school planning is to create an atmosphere where children feel a sense of belonging, thus reducing physical violence on campus. Without efforts to make a safe, disciplined, learning environments for students, trying to raise academic standards and improve student achievement is a lost cause (Lantierei & Patti, 1996).

The teaching of school safety procedures are as of yet to become an integral part of university teacher education programs. Nims and Wilson, (1998) explained that institutions of higher education should be playing a role in preparing educational professionals to address the violence they face in their teaching assignments. In their survey of higher education teaching institutions, 6.7% of larger institutions and 3.8% of small institutions indicated that the institution offers specific violence prevention course. Of the respondents, fewer than half believed their institutions needed more preparation for teachers in the area of violence preparation.

Although universities are not recognizing the need for pre-service teacher training in their current programs, there is a growing belief that "training on conflict resolution, decision making, problem solving and other humanistic skills may be critical link for educators confronted with school violence" (Kandakai & King, 2002, p. 343). Although most universities have yet to offer violence prevention programs to pre-service teachers, it should be noted that some states have passed legislation requiring pre-service training for all school personnel. New York's Project Safe Schools Against violence in Education Act requires pre-service teachers to complete two hours of violence prevention training. Similarly, the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 requires pre-service teachers to be trained in discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Nickerson & Osborne, 2006). Training for teachers should occur as early as possible, and incorporating the training into teacher preparation curriculum will allow pre-service teachers to begin to implement the methods and skills during their pre-service experiences (Kandakai & King, 2002).

Prevention of violence is more cost effective than dealing with crises. Training strategies recommended for potential teachers include; multicultural sensitivity and awareness, conflict management and resolution skills, classroom management and discipline techniques, mediation, reality-based experiences in a variety of school settings, communication, human relations and interpersonal skills (Dear, Scott, & Marshall, 1994). In addition to violence-prevention strategies, pre-service teachers should be given tools and techniques for making subject matter relevant to student experiences. While the focus in schools is on academic standards and improving test scores, this cannot happen without attention being paid to life skills, problem solving, ethnic sensitivity and personal responsibility.

Even though schools would greatly benefit by the arrival of already trained pre-service teachers in the area of school violence and safety, the above information reveals that teachers are learning the procedures while employed as educators in schools. Whether teachers come to schools with prior training or are new to the experience, it is vital that schools conduct training and develop a plan for school safety and crisis management that will prepare both students and staff for the unexpected crisis situation. Thro (2006) explained "While education is an American constitutional value, the opportunity to pursue an education- particularly to pursue quality education- is meaningless unless the student is able to pursue his/her educational rights in an environment that is both safe and secure" (p. 65).

Teachers face more threats of violence and intimidation in school systems now than ever before. According to Devoe et al. (2000), in the 1999-2000 school year 9% of all

teachers were threatened with injury by a student from their school, and 4% were physically attacked by a student. Another study conducted by Devoe et al. (2000) reported that 599,000 violent crimes against teachers were committed. On the average in each year from 1996-2000, about 28 out of every 1,000 teachers were victims of serious crimes, which included the following: rape, sexual assault, robbery and aggravated assault. However, this was a decrease in the rate of crimes against teachers than in previous years. In fact, the U.S. Department of Justice reported from 1994 through 1998 that teachers were victims of 1,755, 000 nonfatal crimes at school including 1,087,000 thefts and 668,000 violent crimes such as rape or sexual assault. This translates into 83 crimes per 1,000 teachers per year. Teaching was once considered a safe and honorable occupation for women and men. However, DeVoe, et al. (2000) suggested that some teachers are at a greater risk for victimization from disruptive students. According to O'Halloran (2000), violence against teachers appears to be on the rise and those assaults on teachers are averaging at least one per day. Male teachers or more than twice as likely to be victims of violent crimes, and teachers at middle and junior high schools are at a greater risk than elementary and senior high school teachers. In addition, violence against teachers is higher at urban schools. It is hard to imagine returning to school after suffering an act of violence. This violence has to take a personal toll on teachers and other staff members. Futrell (1996) suggests that teachers are leaving the profession for

some of the following reasons: more and more teachers report they are afraid of students in their classrooms, some teachers are cautious to discipline children out of fear for personal safety and they are tired of the aggravation of trying to teach in environments that are not conducive to learning.

Perceptions of school violence acts can vary among the school family, which consists of students, teachers, principals, parents and community members. Price and Everett (1997) conducted a series of studies examining the perceptions of students, principals and teachers surrounding school violence. A national study was performed with almost 600 school principals to assess their perceptions of school violence. The results showed that a relatively small percentage of principals viewed violence related acts such as threatening students (11%), stealing (10%), fighting (5%) and gang activity (3%) as major problems for their school. Principals believed that parental factors such as lack of involvement and supervision played a major role in the use of violence by students. Principals viewed the violence provocation as playing a major role in the cause of violence. Violence can take place against everyone in the community such as children, youth, women, men and the elderly. The Columbine High School tragedy left U.S. school communities shaken by the knowledge that there may be trouble youth with the ability to commit acts of violence (Butterfield, 2001). According to Walker (1995), 89% of respondents in 700 cities and towns surveyed by the National League of Cities in 1994 said that school violence is a problem in their community. In the National Association of Educators of Young Children (1993) researchers identified several major causes for increased violent behavior

at school and in the community which consist of the following: poverty, racism, unemployment, substance abuse, easy access to weapons, inadequate or abusive parenting practices and frequent exposure to violence through the media.

To provide this safe and secure environment, several levels of preparation need to occur at the school level. These methods of preparation include establishing a school crisis response team and developing a school crisis response plan that includes the training of teachers, staff and students to respond appropriately to a crisis situation.

The school crisis response team should consist of members that reflect the entire organization in which they serve. These individuals should not only come from within the school building, bus also include professionals from the surrounding school community (Johnson, 2000; Trump, 2000). Certain situations will require that members of the surrounding school community are contacted for their support services. When the school based crisis response team can handle a situation, the school should be sensitive about bringing outsiders into the situations. Often, the inclusion of unnecessary professions may add to the confusion and disorganization (Lerner, Lindell, & Volpe, 2006). At the school level, it is recommended a school crisis team include the following members; principal, assistant principal, school psychologist, guidance counselor, teachers, school nurse, security officer and ancillary staff (Johnson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2006; Peterson & Straub, 1992; Stephens, 1998).

The school crisis response team, consisting of the above members, is established for the purpose of serving the need of schools pertaining to crisis prevention and response.

In the event of a crisis, the purpose of the school crisis response team is to administer care at the site following a crisis. This level of involvement requires that the school crisis response team members receive training covering all areas of crisis management (Johnson, 2000; Stephens, 1998).

Not only does the school crisis response team respond to crisis situations, they also work to develop plans before incidents occur. The team has a responsibility to gather information necessary to stay informed about new knowledge pertaining to crisis control. They prepare staff for what can be expected in a crisis situation and as well as provide training for individually designated roles. The team submits plans to the local school board, helps to develop policies, and informs the schools' student services office, local police, fire and rescue department of the school's plans and procedures (Nicoletti & Spencer-Thomas, 2002; Peterson & Straub, 1992).

Our nation has learned from the many tragic events that have occurred during the past two decades that it is imperative we are prepared for future incidents in our schools. One method of preparing ourselves is through the establishment of a unified crisis response team.

> A debriefing of official from several cities that experienced school shootings in 1997 and 1998 identified as one of the primary lessons from their experiences the importance of having a well-defined crisis response team, on with the ability to communicate and effectively collaborate on responding to and managing crisis incidents. (Reisman, as cited in Trump, 2007, p. 18)

The law in most states mandates safe school planning; however, safe school planning at most schools equates to the development of a crisis plan to be used in case of fire, earthquake, toxic spills or acts of violence. Oftentimes these plans are placed in obscure places on school campuses only known to administrators. The plans are often district level generated or produced with the aid of outside consultants who do not know the local school dynamics (Stephens, 1998).

The principal plays a key role in safe school planning. In relation to school violence, there are two types of administrators: those who have already faced a crisis and those who will at some point in their careers. Courts across America have placed school boards on notice that they must create safe school campuses or be prepared to compensate victims of violent acts. A principal who initiates effective safe school planning can prevent many crises and preclude a series of successive crisis. A school administrator who does not work to enact an effective safe school plan is neglecting an important aspect of his or her position as a school leader. Since young students are compelled by law to attend school, school leaders should be compelled to provide an environment that is safe, secure, peaceful, and welcoming. An effective school plan will help reduce violence and promote a positive educational climate (Mississippi Department of Education Office of Safe and Orderly Schools and Mississippi Office of Attorney General, 2005).

Prior to drafting a safe school plan, several steps should be taken to ensure that an information-based plan is being drafted. Site assessments necessitate the review of the

Prior to drafting a safe school plan, several steps should be taken to ensure that an information-based plan is being drafted. Site assessments necessitate the review of the physical environment to determine if there are areas where the safety and security of students and staff may be jeopardized. School resource officers provide valuable input when conducting site assessments. Since these officers follow a community of policing policy in the school environment, they can train school officials on what to look for when monitoring campuses for potential problematic areas (National Policy Board For Educational Administration, 1993).

Administrators should maintain statistics concerning incidents of violence and school crime. This gives an overview of the types of problems that are occurring at school. The entire school community should be surveyed to determine areas of concern and uncover behaviors that might reflect these concerns. With this type of information, decisions about prevention strategies and focus areas of safe school plans can be made on an information-based level (Mississippi Department of Education Office of Safe and Orderly Schools and Mississippi Office of Attorney General, 2005).

While safe school plans share common components, no two should be alike (Stephens, 1994). Each school must develop a plan that meets the uniqueness and needs of the school it is to serve. For some schools, the grounds, school building and maintenance issues will be the focus of the safe school plan. For other schools, gang violence, drugs, weapons, bullying or assaults may be the focus of the plan. A safe school plan is a function of the specified and unique issues the school is facing (Mississippi Department

of Education Office of Safe and Orderly Schools and Mississippi Office of Attorney General, 2005).

The most important elements of a safe school plan is training all school personnel in early warning signs some students exhibit prior to committing acts of violence. As stated in the literature, no "profile" of a school shooter or any other student prone to violence exists. However, educators, parents and even students can recognize certain early warning signs. Since violence is complex, in some situations and for some youth, different combinations of events, behaviors and emotions can lead to aggressive rage or violent behavior toward self and others (Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998).

No sign alone is a sufficient indicator of aggression and violence. It is inappropriate and potentially harmful to use early warning signs as a checklist against which to match an individual student. Early warning signs are merely an aid to identify and refer students who may need help. The following are early warning signs that school officials should be trained to look for:

Social withdrawal;

Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone;

Excessive feelings of rejection;

Victims of violence;

Students who feel picked on or persecuted;

Low school interest and poor academic performance;

Expressions of violence in writings and drawings;

Uncontrolled anger;

Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating and bullying behaviors;

History of discipline problems;

Past history of violent and aggressive behavior;

Drug and alcohol use;

Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes;

Affiliaiton with gangs;

Access to firearms or other weapons; and

Prior serious threats of violence. (Stephens, 1998, p. 263-264)

While no guarantees exist that better awareness of potential problems is enough to prevent tragedies from happening, awareness based on solid information can give the school staff the confidence that they are doing everything possible to enhance the safety and security of the school campus (Stephens, 1994).

A disciplined environment conducive to learning moves beyond misbehaving individuals to focus on schools and classrooms organized to maximize the intellectual and personal development of students, to increase participation in academic endeavors, and minimize disruptions. Discipline codes are a starting place to achieving this type of positive school climate. The effects of a disciplined school environments can be seen in the positive attitudes and behaviors of students and teachers (Aleem & Oliver, 1993).

Effective and consistent adult supervision must be seen and felt on school campuses (Stephens, 1998). School staff must be assigned to hallways, stairwells, locker rooms, bathrooms, cafeterias and school grounds (National School Safety Center, 2010). When

adults on campus maintain a high profile, which includes individual and group contacts, the school climate is positively impacted. Adults on school campuses "must express sincere feelings toward students, a genuine interest in their lives and a real belief that they have the potential to become successful adults" (Greenbaum, Gonzalez, & Ackley, 1989, p. 219).

Summary

Middle school students are more than twice as likely as high school students to be affected by school violence. Seven percent of eighth graders stay at home at least once a month to avoid a bully and the prospect of violent actions from the bully. Twenty-two percent of urban 11 and 12 year-olds know at least one person their age that is in a gang. The typical victim of an assault or robbery at school is a male in the seventh grade that is assaulted by a boy his own age. Middle school violence is more prevalent for a variety of reasons. Adolescences is a difficult age and these young students are often physically overactive and have not learned acceptable social behaviors. Middle school students will often come into contact with students from different backgrounds and distant neighborhoods for the first time. The self-contained classrooms from elementary school are no longer an option. Students change classes, encounter a higher number of students and do not establish close relationships with adults on campus. All of these factors combined lead to the propensity of violence on middle school campuses (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2010).

The literature supports the fact that incidents of school violence are no more prevalent in today's schools than they were 20 years ago. In fact, the overall rate of violence has declined in recent years; however, the rates of violence committed by youth have increased over the last 10 years (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2010). Even though there has been an increase in youth violence it has not affected the overall rate of school violence. According to the Office of Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention (2010), in the past few years, the severity of violence acts has shifted from fights and harassment to murder. With all the publicity that has been focused on high profile shootings like Columbine; they have prompted a focus on school violence and the ways in which schools are responding. The literature also supports Furlong and Morrison's (2000) claim that students who carry weapons are more likely to engage in acts of violence (Lowry, Powell, & Kann, 1998; Malek, Chang, & Davis, 1998). How prepared are teachers, assistant principals and principals to respond to acts of violence?

This study examined the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals and principals to respond to acts of violence to include but not limited to aggravated assault, robbery/extortion, sex offenses or possession of a weapon. The literature available on school violence addresses youth violence as a concept, school violence as a national crisis, prevention and intervention strategies, safe school planning and crisis intervention strategies. The literature did not adequately address the preparedness levels of those in schools who will respond when violent acts occur. This study expanded the literature on school violence to include preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals and principals on middle school campuses.

Chapter III of the study articulated the research methodology. The design of the study was explained by including the sample and population, data instruments used, and the specific data collection and analysis procedures utilized. Chapter IV provided communication of the findings of this quantitative study in relationship to the four research questions. Chapter V discussed the immediate and long-range implications of this study. Recommendations for further research regarding preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals and principals to respond to acts of violence was discussed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter III describes the participants and design of the study. It outlines the research questions that were addressed in the study. It identifies and defines the independent and dependent variables. This chapter also explains the intended data, the data collection process, the instrument that was used and the statistical analyses that was undertaken to interpret the data.

Research Design

The design of this study was a quantitative research design. Data was collected from teachers, assistant principals and principals in determining preparedness levels to respond to acts of violence. Quantitative research is defined in Business Dictionary.com (2010) as a use of sampling techniques whose findings maybe expressed numerically. According to Dobney.com (2000), quantitative research relies on a fixed questionnaire that should be administered the same way to each respondent to obtain a reliable measure.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to first determine if teachers, assistant principals, and principals are prepared to deal with acts of violence. The second purpose of the study was to determine if the years of experience is a factor in determining the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals. The third purpose of the study was

to determine if the teachers and principal assigned to the alternative are better trained to deal with acts of violence than teachers, assistant principals, and principals assigned to middle schools. The fourth purpose of the study was to determine if the performance classification of a school has an effect on the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals. The fifth purpose of the study was to determine if a correlation exists between the number of occurrences and the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals. The final purpose of the study was to determine if a correlation exists between the number of occurrences reported by students and the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals.

Research Questions

1. Are middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals prepared to respond to an act of violence to include but not limited to aggravated assault, robbery/extortion, sex offenses, or possession of a weapon?
2. Do the number of years of experience have an effect on the preparedness level of how a middle school teacher, assistant principal, and principal will respond to an act of violence to include but not limited to aggravated assault, robbery/extortion, sex offenses, or possession of a weapon?
3. Are teachers who are assigned to the alternative school more prepared to deal with acts of violence than teachers who are assigned to a middle school?
4. Does the performance classification of a school have an effect on the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals?

5. Is there a correlation between the number of occurrences and the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals?
6. Is there a correlation between the number of occurrences reported by students and the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals?

Sample Population

The population of this study was middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals in a Mississippi School District. There are a total of six middle schools located in this district. Five of the schools are traditional middle schools and one is an alternative school. All but one school is assigned an assistant principal. The schools are located throughout one county and all serve diverse populations.

School A is an 8th grade only school that has a faculty of approximately 40 certified teachers on staff and serves approximately 430 students. It is a Title I school and is located in an urban area. School B is a 7th grade only school that has a faculty of approximately 41 certified teachers on staff and serves approximately 460 students. It is a Title I school and is located in an urban area. School A and School B are located on one large campus. Each school has a separate office, cafeteria, assistant principal, and principal. The schools share a common gym and library. Students for both schools ride the same buses. These middle school campuses are unique because they serve six elementary schools from very different communities.

School C is a K-8 campus. The middle school has its on gym, but shares a library and cafeteria with elementary students. School C has 105 certified teachers. Of the 105

teachers 27 teach middle school. They however, have two assistant principals and serve approximately 1200 total students. The middle school not only serves the elementary students on campus but also two additional elementary schools in the area. This school is a Title I school and serves rural and suburban areas.

School D is a K-8 campus. It is the sister campus to School C. School D serves approximately 850 students through approximately 80 certified teachers. Of the 80 teachers 20 teach middle school. The middle school not only serves the elementary students on its campus but also from an additional elementary school. This school began receiving Title I funds for the 2009-2010 school year and serves rural and suburban areas.

School E serves approximately 660 students in grades fifth to eighth grades with 67 faculty members. School E was completely destroyed in 2005 by Hurricane Katrina. The new campus is now located in the building once occupied by a high school. The city has three schools, an elementary, middle, and high schools. This school is a Title I school and serves suburban areas.

The alternative school was established in 1989 to offer students an alternative to expulsion while providing an academic curriculum. There are currently three seventh and eight grade teachers, four ninth through twelfth grade teachers and two special education teachers. The alternative school serves all five of the middle schools and three high schools in this school district. Students are required to serve a minimum of thirty days. Behavior and attendance determine the length of stay.

Instrumentation

Teachers, assistant principals, and principals responded to the researcher developed instrument (Appendix A). Some questions were used from the survey found in the Mississippi School Safety Manual Appendix II (Mississippi Department of Education Office of Safe and Orderly Schools and Mississippi Office of Attorney General, 2005). Permission was given to administer and modify the survey instrument of the Mississippi School Safety Manual 2005 "It is recommended that assessment instruments be used to assess perceptions" (p. 3). The manual states that the appendices are only examples of survey instruments. The survey instrument, according to Issaac and Michael (1997), is a widely used technique to help a researcher, "describe what exists, in what amount, and in what context" (136). The purpose of this study was to determine the preparedness levels of middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals to respond to various acts of violence on campus. Therefore, the survey instrument provided the researcher with a measure of levels of preparedness levels in various contexts or violent situations.

The panel of experts who checked the researcher-developed survey was a district director, principal, and lead teacher. The researcher used the validity questionnaire to help develop the survey. The district director suggested that the survey should contain a larger font and to create lines or a table format to organize the answers. The principal made no recommendations for changes and stated that the survey was well planned and reliable. The lead teacher suggested that some of the questions should be grouped together to make the survey shorter. The recommended adjustments and changes were

made to the survey. The survey was designed using a Likert type Scale.

The survey was piloted using a group of fifth grade teachers. A Cronbach's alpha of .859 was achieved on questions 27-33. Most of the respondents had little or no violence in their school.

Data Collection Procedures

On January 5, 2011, the researcher was given permission by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi to administer surveys to middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals within the Mississippi School District. A letter was written (Appendix B) to the district superintendent where the middle schools and alternative schools were located that were included in this study. The letter asked for permission and included an explanation of the study, methodology, survey instrument, and the time it would take to administer the survey on site at faculty meetings. With the superintendent's approval (Appendix C) and IRB approval (Appendix D), an e-mail was placed to the principal at each of the five middle schools and one alternative school. Three principals gave approval for the researcher to attend a faculty meeting with the purpose of administering the research-designed survey. When the study was presented directly to the faculty, the researcher collected the completed questionnaires after the presentation.

There are two identifying factors on the survey. Job category and school setting do not allow for anonymity for teachers who teach in an alternative setting, principals and assistant principals.

Statistical Analysis

The preparedness levels of teachers compared to assistant principals and principals, as well as assistant principals compared to principals, were compared using descriptive statistics. The preparedness levels based on the number of years of experience were compared using a one-way ANOVA. The preparedness levels of traditional teachers compared to alternative school teachers were compared using a one-way t-Test design. The performance classification of each school having an effect on the preparedness level was compared using a one-way ANOVA. The correlation between occurrences and preparedness levels was compared using correlational design as was the correlation between the number of reports from students and the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals.

Limitations

The sample population of this study was limited to middle schools. The study was also limited to only one school district in the State of Mississippi.

Summary

This chapter served as a guide to the methods that were used in the study. It gave insight into the research questions, sample population, research design, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and analysis of the results. The goal of this research was to examine the perceived preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals to respond to acts of violence. Chapter IV presents the findings of the study and Chapter V discussed the immediate and long- range implications of this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The research was designed to answer questions regarding the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals to respond to acts of violence. The research included years of experience, alternative school setting, traditional school setting, performance classification, correlation between occurrences, and the number of occurrences reported by students. This chapter includes the descriptive data collected from the questionnaires completed by the respondents in the study. The data analysis was used to test the stated research questions. Data was collected from the questionnaires, which were given to the participating middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals. The principals for the six perspective schools received e-mails asking for permission to come to their campus to distribute and collect the surveys during a faculty meeting. Five principals responded asking for the questionnaires to be sent to them through interoffice mail to conduct the surveys themselves. One principal scheduled the researcher for February 15, 2011, at 3:20 to distribute and collect the surveys during the faculty meeting. The possible number of surveys that the researcher could have collected would have been 200. One hundred seven surveys were collected by the researcher, for a return rate 54% of eligible teachers, assistant principals, and principals.

Descriptives

The majority of the respondents were teachers (Table 1).

Table 1

Job Category

Job Title	n	Percent
Principal	6	5.6
Assistant Principal	5	4.7
Teachers	96	89.7
Total	107	100

The level of experience with the least amount of respondents was the 1-3 years of experience at 16.8% (n=18), and the level of experience with the greatest amount of respondents was 8-15 years of experience at 37.4% (n=40). Respondents with 4-7 years of experience, 24.3% (n=26), and 16 + years of experience 21.5% (n=23) were close in comparison (Table 2).

Table 2

Experience Level

Years of Experience	n	Percent
1-3	18	16.8

Table 2 (continued).

Years of Experience	n	Percent
4-7	26	24.3
8-15	40	37.4
16+	23	21.5
Total	107	100

The majority of the respondents were female 78.5% (n=84) and only 21.5% (n=23) were males (Table 3).

Table 3

Gender of Participants

Gender	n	Percent
Male	23	21.5
Female	84	78.5
Total	107	100

The grade levels varied from grades 5- 12. Respondents who work just with eight graders 31.8% (n=34) and seventh graders 30.8% (n=33) were the greatest amount. 13.1% (n=14) of the respondents work with seventh and eighth grade students. 8.4% (n=9) of the respondents work with fifth-eighth grade students, whereas 7.5% (n=8) work

with only sixth graders. 1.9% (n=2) of the respondents work with fifth and sixth grade students and sixth-eight graders. The remaining respondents work with a variety of grade levels ranging from fifth-twelfth (Table 4). Only 5.6% (n=6) of the respondents work with students in an alternative setting. 94.4% (n=101) work with students in a traditional school setting (Table 5).

Table 4

Grade Levels Taught

Grade Level	n	Percent
5,6	2	1.9
5-12	1	.9
5,6,7	1	.9
5,6,7,8	10	9.3
5,6,8	1	.9
6	8	7.5
6,7,8	2	1.9
7	33	30.8
7,8	14	13.1
7-12	1	.9
8	34	31.8
Total	107	100

Table 5

School Setting

School Setting	n	Percent
Alternative Setting	6	5.6
Traditional Setting	101	94.4
Total	107	100

The majority (89.7%, n=96) of the respondents stated they were aware of the school crisis plan. These plans are located in the school office and it is the duty and responsibility of the administration to make all employees aware of the procedures in the plan. Only 10.3% (n=11) of the respondents stated that they were not aware of their schools crisis plan (Table 6).

Table 6

Crisis Plan

Awareness of Crisis Plan	n	Percent
Yes	96	89.7
No	11	10.3
Total	107	100

Becoming involved and active in your school will develop the climate and atmosphere of the school. Approximately 47.7% (n=51) of the respondents stated they felt very safe in their school environments. 49.5% (n=53) responded they felt safe, whereas only 2.8% (n=3) stated they felt unsafe (Table 7).

Table 7

Feeling of Safety

Feelings	n	Percent
Very Safe	51	47.7
Safe	53	49.5
Unsafe	3	2.8
Total	107	100

Approximately 86.9% (n=93) of the respondents stated they were working in a high performing school. 5.6% (n=6) stated they were working a successful school and 3.7%(n=4) stated they were working in a star school. The ranking of schools for the state of Mississippi begins with star ranking. The next level is high performing followed by successful, academic watch, at-risk of failing, and failing. 3.7% (n=4) of the respondents however did not respond to this question (Table 8).

Table 8

School Ranking

Ranking Level	n	Percent
Star	4	3.7
High Performing	93	86.9
Successful	6	5.6
No Response	4	3.7
Total	107	100

Almost half (45.8%, n=49) of the respondents stated that their school was ranked the same for the past two years. 50.5% (n=54) of the respondents stated that their schools were not ranked the same for the past two years. 3.7% (n=4) of the respondents however did not respond to this question (Table 9).

Table 9

School Ranking for Two Consecutive Years

Same Ranking	n	Percent
Yes	49	45.8
No	54	50.5
No Response	3	3.7
Total	107	100

Statistical Test Results

Research Question 1 stated: Are middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals prepared to respond to an act of violence to include but not limited to aggravated assault, robbery/extortion, sex offenses, or possession of a weapon? Questions 27-33 of the questionnaire asked respondents how prepared they felt in dealing with different acts of violence. The seven questions were gauged on a 5-point Likert scale where 1=*Not Well,* 2=*Not Well,* 3=*Somewhat,* 4=*Well,* and 5= *Very Well.* All 7 questions were computed together to form a mean score in SPSS and then analyzed by the researcher to determine if there was a statistical difference.

Question 30 of the questionnaire had the greatest mean (M=3.97), teachers, assistant principals, and principals felt prepared to respond to verbal abuse. Question 32 of the questionnaire had the least mean (M=2.90), teachers, assistant principals, and principals felt the least prepared to respond to an act of assault with a deadly weapon. Question 33 of the questionnaire had the next to the lowest mean (M=3.09), teachers, assistant principals, and principals also did not feel prepared to respond to an act of possession of a deadly weapon (Table 10).

Table 10

Preparedness Levels of Teachers to Respond to Violent Acts

Question	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
30. Verbal abuse	107	3.97	.94
31. Sexual offense	107	3.73	1.06

Table 10 (continued).

Question	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
29. Battery	107	3.47	1.05
28. Extortion	107	3.43	1.10
27. Robbery	107	3.38	1.10
33. Possession of a deadly weapon	107	3.09	1.33
32. Assault with a deadly weapon	107	2.90	1.31

Note. Means 1=Not at all; 5= Very Well

Research Question 2 stated: Do the number of years of experience have an effect on the preparedness level of how a middle school teacher, assistant principal, and principal will respond to an act of violence to include but not limited to aggravated assault, robbery/extortion, sex offense, or possession of a weapon? Question 2 of the questionnaire asked for respondents to choose the years of experience. The categories were entered in SPSS and gauged on the scale of 1=1-3, 2=4-7, 3=8-15, and 4= 16 or more (Table 11).

Table 11

Means of Preparedness by Years of Experience

	Years	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	1-3	18	3.48	.90
2	4-7	26	3.39	.87

Table 11 (continued).

	Years	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
3	8-15	40	3.58	1.07
4	16 +	23	3.13	.94
Total		107	3.42	.97

Note. Means 1= 1-3; 4 = 16 or more

A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data for question 2. There was not a significant difference, $F(3,103) = 1.068$, $p = .366$, in the preparedness level of middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals by the number of years experience.

Research Question 3 stated: Are teachers who are assigned to the alternative school more prepared to deal with acts of violence than teachers who are assigned to a middle school? The data was entered into SPSS and gauged on a scale of 1= yes and 2= no. A t-test was used to analyze the data for question 3. There was not a significant difference, $t(105) = .933$, $p = .353$. Of the 107 teachers, assistant principals, and principals only (n=6) stated they worked at an alternative school. The mean (M=3.78) of alternative school teachers and principals was not significant compared to the mean (M=3.43) of traditional teachers, assistant principals, and principals (Table 12).

Table 12

Preparedness Levels of Alternative School

	Alternative	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
Preparedness	Yes	6	3.78	.33

Table 12 (continued).

	Alternative	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
	No	101	3.40	.09

Note. Means 1= Yes; 2 = No

Research Question 4 stated: Does the performance classification of a school have an effect on the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals? The data was entered into SPSS with 1= star rating, 2= high performing, 3= successful, 4= academic watch, 5= at-risk-of failing, and 6 = failing. None of the participants in this study selected anything less than successful for their schools classification. Only 4 participants (n = 4) with a mean (M=3.32) and standard deviation of (SD =.57) stated their school was a star school. The majority of the participants (n = 93) with a mean (M =3.46) and a standard deviation (SD =1.00) selected high performing. 6 participants (n=6) with a mean (M=2.92) and a standard deviation (SD =.85) selected successful as there school status. A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data for question 4. There was no significant difference, $F(2,100) = .846$, $p = .432$, in the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals and the performance classification of a school. The mean (M=.83) between the groups and (M = .98) within the groups.

Research Question 5 stated: Is there a correlation between the number of occurrences reported by students and the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals? Questions 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, and 24 ask respondents how many student reports they had received. The seven questions were gauged on a 4-point Likert scale

where 1=*Never,* 2=*One to Two Times,* 3= *Three to Four Times, and* 4= *More Than Four.*

Question 18 had the greatest mean (M=2.33) with question 22 having the least mean (M=1.02). Question 14 had the next to the least mean (M=1.11) with question 12 having the second greatest mean (M=2.22) (Table 13).

Table 13

Student Reports of Occurrences

Question	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
12. Stolen item from place at school	107	2.22	1.02
14. Taken things by use of force or weapons	107	1.11	.31
16. Physically threatened or attacked	107	1.89	.93
18. Verbally abused	107	2.33	1.08
20. Sexual advances or sexually assault	107	1.39	.67
22. Assaulted with a deadly weapons	107	1.02	.13
24. Possession of a weapon	107	1.20	.48

Note. Means 1 = Never; 4 = More Than Four

Questions 27-33 asked the respondents how prepared they felt to respond to an act of violence. The seven questions were gauged on a 5-point Likert scale with 1= *Not at All,* 2 = *Not Well*, 3 = *Somewhat*, 4 = *Well*, 5 = *Very Well.*

A Pearson's correlation revealed a negative correlation between the number of occurrences reported by students and the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals r (107) = -.055, p = .963, thus showing no significance.

Question 30 had the greatest mean (M=3.97) and question 32 had the least mean (M=2.90). Question 31 had the second greatest mean (M=3.73) and question 33 had the second least mean (M=3.09). The mean (M = 3.42) and standard deviation (SD = .97) for preparedness levels and a mean (M = 1.59) and standard deviation (SD = .45) for student reports of occurrences that were reported by participants (Table 14).

Table 14

Preparedness and Student Reports

Type	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
Preparedness	107	3.42	.97
Student Reports	107	1.5	.45

Note. Preparedness 1=Not at All; 5=Very Well Student Reports1=Never;4= More than Four

Research Question 6 stated: Is there a correlation between the number of occurrences and the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals? Questions 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, and 26 ask teachers, assistant principals, and principals to report the number of occurrences that they had experienced. The nine questions were gauged on a 4- point Likert scale where 1=*Never,* 2=*One to Two Times,* 3= *Three to Four Times, and* 4= *More Than Four.*

Question 25 had the greatest mean (M= 1.72) reported by participants, while question 21 had the least mean (M= 1.01) reported. Question 17 had the second greatest mean (M = 1.64) while question 13 had the second least mean (M = 1.06) (Table 15).

Table 15

Number of Occurrences Experienced by Teachers

Question	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
11. Stolen item from school	107	1.48	.79
13. Taken things by use of force or weapons	107	1.06	.33
15. Physically threatened or attacked	107	1.08	.28
17. Verbally abused	107	1.64	.96
19. Sexual advances or sexually assault	107	1.09	.37
21. Assaulted with a deadly weapon	107	1.01	.09
23. Possession of a weapon	107	1.15	.40
25. Witnessed fights	107	1.72	.85
26. Reported violence	106	1.63	.83

Note. Mean 1= Never; 4=More Than Four

Questions 27-33 asked the respondents how prepared they felt to respond to an act of violence. The seven questions were gauged on a 5-point Likert scale with 1= *Not at All,* 2 = *Not Well*, 3 = *Somewhat*, 4 = *Well*, 5 = *Very Well.*

A Pearson's correlation revealed a negative correlation between the number of occurrences and the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals r (107) = -.033, p = .739, thus showing no significance. Question 30 had the greatest mean (M=3.97) and question 32 had the least mean (M=2.90). Question 31 had the second greatest mean (M=3.73) and question 33 had the second least mean (M=3.09).

The mean (M = 3.42) and standard deviation (SD = .97) for preparedness levels and a mean (M = 1.43) and standard deviation (SD = .32) for student reports of occurrences were reported by participants (Table 16).

Table 16

Preparedness and Occurrences

Type	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
Preparedness	107	3.42	.97
Occurrences	107	1.43	.32

Note. Preparedness 1=Not at All; 5= Very Well Occurrences 1= Never; 4= More Than Four

Ancillary Findings

In addition to the six research questions that were analyzed, there were also some additional findings that were beneficial to this study. In these findings, there was a group of questions from the questionnaire that were not closely analyzed. Questions 34-40 asked respondents to rank the problems at their school. The questions were gauged on a 4-point Likert scale with 1= *Don't Know,* 2 = *No Problem*, 3 = *Small Problem*, 4 = *Serious Problem.*

Question 34 had the greatest mean (M = 2.54) while question 39 had the least mean (M = 1.84). Question 40 had the second greatest mean (M = 2.39) with question 36 had the second least mean (M =2.04) (Table 17).

Table 17

Problems at School

Question	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
34. Vandalism	107	2.54	.78
35. Gangs	107	2.35	.72
36. Alcohol	107	2.04	.72
37. Tobacco	107	2.29	.80
38. Drug use	107	2.31	.85
39. Students carrying weapons	107	1.84	.66
40. Racial conflict	107	2.39	.79

Note. Means 1=Don't Know; 4 = Serious Problem

An analysis of the data was done comparing preparedness, occurrences, and student reports. Preparedness had the greatest mean (M = 3.42), while occurrences had the lowest mean (M = 1.43) selected by the participants (Table 18).

Table 18

Comparison of Preparedness, Occurrences, and Student Reports of Incidents

Comparison Area	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
Preparedness	107	3.42	.97
Occurrences	107	1.43	.32
Student Reports	107	1.59	.45

Note. 1 = Not at all; 5= Very Well;1= Not at all;5= Very Well; 1= Never; 4 = More Than Four

An analysis of the data was calculated completing a Pearson Correlation. This comparison showed a significant relationship between occurrences and seriousness with r (107) = .328, p = .001 and student reports and seriousness r (107) = .345, $p \leq .001$. Participants indicated that as more student reports and occurrences took place the more prepared they felt to deal with situations (Table 19). Participants indicated that an increase in frequency of occurrences and student reports made them feel as if the problems were more serious and increased the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals.

Table 19

Pearson Correlation among Three Variables

	Serious	Occurrences	Student Report
Serious	1.00	.328**	.345**
Occurrences	.328**	1.00	.896
Student Report	.345**	.896	1.00

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary

This study was conducted to examine the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals to respond to an act of violence. The available literature on school violence concentrates on statistics related to youth and juvenile crime and the infiltration of neighborhood violence into public school systems. There is an abundance of statistics that cite the number of crimes suffered by students and teachers on school campuses; however there is little research on how prepared those who work on school campuses are to respond to violent acts when they occur.

Conclusions

The focus of this study was to examine the preparedness levels of middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals to respond to acts of violence. Research question 1 stated: Are middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals prepared to respond to an act of violence to include but not limited to aggravated assault, robbery/extortion, sex offenses, or possession of a weapon? It can be concluded by analyzing the data; middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals are prepared to respond to acts of violence. Planning during each school year continues to emphasize safety and implement preparedness levels.

Research question 2 stated: Do the number of years of experience have an effect on the preparedness level of how a middle school teacher, assistant principal, and principal

will respond? It can be concluded by analyzing the data; the number of years of experience does not have an effect on the preparedness level of middle school teachers, assistant principal, and principal.

Research question 3 stated: Are teachers who are assigned to the alternative school more prepared to deal with acts of violence than teachers who are assigned to a middle school? It can be concluded by analyzing the data, that the assignment does not effect the preparedness level of middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals.

Research question 4 stated: Does the performance classification of a school have an effect on the preparedness level of teachers, assistant principals, and principals? It can be concluded by analyzing the data, that the classification of a school does not effect the preparedness level of middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals. The classification levels of the schools analyzed were successful, high performing, and star. These are the top three classifications awarded to schools.

Research question 5 stated: Is there a correlation between the number of occurrences reported by students and the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals and principals? It can be concluded by analyzing the data, that there is not a correlation between the number of occurrences reported by students and the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals.

Research question 6 stated: Is there a correlation between the number of occurrences and the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals? It can be

concluded by analyzing the data, that there is not a correlation between the number of occurrences and the preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals.

The ancillary findings indicated a relationship between occurrences and preparedness and student reports. The findings supported that middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals feel they are prepared to handle acts of violence as the frequency of occurrences and student reports increase.

Discussion

The acts of violence are becomingly more serious and in order for children in schools to be as safe as possible, school personnel must be prepared to respond to violent acts (Elliott, Hamburg, & Williams, 1998). It is no longer a question of whether acts of violence will occur, but when they will occur. According to Stephens (1994), the best safe school plan involves the entire community. Local law enforcement, parents, students, teachers, community members, and mental health professionals are a few who could be included in writing crisis plans. These plans should change as a school evolves to meet all needs.

America is a violent society and inevitably the violence in community neighborhoods infiltrates onto school campuses. The tragedies such as those in Littleton, Colorado, Edinboro, Pennsylvania, and Pearl, Mississippi brought school violence to the forefront of political debates, legislation, and the legal arenas. The magnitude of violence that occurred on these campuses, while rare, captured the attention of every parent, student, teacher, and administrator across the nation.

According to Rich, 1992, the problems of the outside world are causing disorder and chaos in the traditionally protected environment of the school. Children who are victims of crime, drugs and violence at home are more likely to act out in the classroom. Males are more likely than females to carry weapons; however, females are more likely to carry or use knives than guns (Hill & Drolet, 1999; Weiler, 2000). The research of the 1990s has reported that "guns kill about 25 youngsters every two days, and adolescents between ages 10 to 19 years are killed by guns at a rate of one every three hours" (Wood & Zalud, 1996, p. 397). The chances of a student dying a violent death in an American high school is five times higher than in other developed industrialized countries (Shafii & Shafii, 2001).

Training and preparation for violent situations should be a priority for all educational institutions. School and district level administrators must build upon a foundation of safety and provide ongoing training in all areas of school violence. Assistant principals and principals are not the most likely to encounter such violent acts (National School Safety Center, 2010).

Teacher training programs tend to focus on curriculum, standards, and classroom management. These programs are designed to teach teachers how to teach not how to deal with the shy student in class who at any moment could turn violent. Administrative training programs focus on leadership, organizational management, fiscal resources, and public relations. Administrators receive minimal inadequate training on school violence. According to the National Policy Board For Educational Administration (1993) role play,

studying acts of violence, or creating real-life scenarios are not always part of the administrative curriculum.

Limitations

The current research limitations are that this study was limited to only one school district. The perceptions gathered in this study do not reflect the perceptions of all middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals. Acts of violence occur in all levels of the educational settings, therefore preparedness levels were not included in this study.

Recommendations for Policy or Practice

In addition to the current study, a prevention and intervention training should be conducted based on needs expressed by teachers, assistant principals, and principals to respond to acts of violence. The examination of curriculum and training related to violence perception at the university level should be considered by the Mississippi State Department of Education. Another key component would be the involvement of the local police with the middle schools in the area. The impact and programs that are provided by police departments based upon grants can have a positive impact not only for students, but to also train teachers, assistant principals, and principals in dealing with violent acts. Police departments are also key roles in communicating with schools the violence and occurrences in the neighborhoods that surround them.

Recommendations for Future Research

The scope of this study should be expanded to include all middle schools located in the state of Mississippi. The preparedness levels in different areas of the state would give a broader perspective on the true needs of middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals. Also, studying the participants using gender as a key role in comparing preparedness. There are fewer males in the education field and a comparison could be done to see if males are more prepared than females or if females are more prepared than males. A replication of this study should be conducted at the elementary and high school levels to give a different perspective on levels of preparedness. High school teachers, assistant principals, and principals are prepared at different levels from elementary teachers, assistant principals, and principals. To further the study, a replication should be conducted at the junior college and university level. Past violence has shown that these acts occur on at the post-secondary level as well. The preparedness levels of teachers and administrators at each level should be questioned and studied. Research is limited in these areas and additional research would provide districts and universities with the necessary tools to continue to plan for violent acts.

In addition, a study should be conducted to determine teacher's perceptions of the most effective training received in violence prevention/intervention. If the training is deemed important and beneficial to teachers, then it should be shared and used throughout the state and nation. Also, study school districts that use real-life scenarios to

train teachers on campus violence and their effect in improving the levels of preparedness of school personnel to respond to acts of violence on campus.

APPENDIX A

RESPONSE TO ACTS OF VIOLENCE: ARE YOU PREPARED?

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey on Response to Acts of Violence. This survey is being administered to gain important information regarding preparedness levels of teachers, assistant principals, and principals to acts of violence.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. If you choose to participate, all of your responses will be kept confidential. All individual information will be kept confidential and will not be shared with any staff members at the schools, districts, state or university personnel except as summary information. No individuals will be identified in any of these reports. Please do not put your name on the questionnaire. There will be no penalty for refusal to participate in this survey.

Please complete the survey questions to the best of your ability. When the surveys are completed by all middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals, the data will be analyzed by Judy Boyd, doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions of concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39496-0001, (601) 266-6820. Any questions about the research should be directed at Judy Boyd at jboyd@harrison.k12.ms.us or 228-323-4580.

Circle only one answer for each question. Please respond truthfully.

1. Job Category: Principal Assistant Principal Teacher/Literacy Coach

2. Years of experience in your job category: 1-3 4-7 8-15 16 or more

3. Gender: Male Female

4. Grade level or level of courses you teach: (Circle all that apply)
   5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

5. Do you teach in an alternative school setting? Yes No

6. Do you teach in a traditional school setting? Yes No

7. Are you aware of your school's crisis response plan? Yes No

8. How safe do you feel at school? Very safe Safe Unsafe

9. What is your school's current ranking? Star High Performing Successful
   Academic Watch At-Risk- of Failing Failing

10. Has your school received this ranking for the past two years? Yes No

Directions: How many occurrences have you experienced this school year? Choose the response number that best applies to each question and record it in the box to the right of the question. Please do not record your name on this document.

1 = Never 2 = one to two times 3 = three to four times 4 = more than four

#	Description	Rating
11.	This school year, have you had something stolen from your desk, locker, or other place at school?	
12.	This school year, has a student reported to you something stolen from their book bag, locker, desk, or other place at school?	
13.	This school year, has someone taken money or things directly from you by using force, weapons, or threats at school?	
14.	This school year, has a student reported that someone had taken money or things directly from them by using force, weapons, or threats at school?	
15.	This school year, has someone physically threatened, attacked, or hurt you at school?	
16.	This school year, has a student reported that someone has physically threatened, attacked, or hurt them at school?	
17.	This school year, have you been verbally abused at school?	
18.	This school year, has a student reported that someone has verbally abused them at school?	
19.	This school year, has someone made sexual advances or attempted to sexually assault you at school?	
20.	This school year, has a student, reported that someone had made sexual advances or attempted to sexually assault them at school?	
21.	This school year, have you been assaulted with a deadly weapon?	
22.	This school year, has a student reported that someone assaulted them with a deadly weapon?	
23.	This school year, have you seen a student in possession of a weapon?	
24.	This school year, has a student reported that someone was in possession of a weapon?	
25.	This school year, how many fights have you witnessed at your school?	
26.	This school year, how many acts of violence have you reported to an administrator?	

Directions: How prepared do you feel to respond to violent acts? Choose the response number that best applies to each question and record it in the box to the right of the question. Please do not record your name on this document.

1 = Not at all 2 = Not well 3 = Somewhat 4 = Well 5 = Very Well

#	Description	Rating
27.	Do you feel prepared to respond to an act of robbery?	
28.	Do you feel prepared to respond to an act of extortion?	
29.	Do you feel prepared to respond to an act of battery?	
30.	Do you feel prepared to respond to verbal abuse?	
31.	Do you feel prepared to respond to an act of sexual offense?	
32.	Do you feel prepared to respond to an act of assault with a deadly weapon?	
33.	Do you feel prepared to respond to an act of possession of a deadly weapon?	

Directions: Rank the following problems at your school using the response listed below. Please do not record your name on this document.

1 = Don't Know 2 = No Problem 3 = Small Problem 4 = Serious Problem

#	Description	Rating
34.	How serious is vandalism including graffiti at your school?	
35.	How serious are gangs at your school?	
36.	How serious is alcohol use at your school?	
37.	How serious is tobacco use at your school?	
38.	How serious is drug use at your school?	
39.	How serious are students carrying weapons at your school?	
40.	How serious is racial conflict at your school?	

APPENDIX B

LETTER FOR PERMISSION

September 15, 2010

Dear :

I am a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi. I would like to visit each middle school and alternative school to administer a survey to middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals. The questionnaire will provide data for my study, which is titled "Preparedness Levels of Teachers, Assistant Principals, and Principals to Respond to Acts of Violence in a Mississippi School District".

All responses will be treated with confidentiality and the data will be entered so no respondent is identifiable.

Thank you for your participation in this project. Please feel free to call me at (228) 860-0531 or (228) 323-4580, If you have any questions regarding this study.

Sincerely,

Judy A. Boyd
The University of Southern Mississippi Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C

SUPERINTENDENT'S PERMISSION LETTER

September 16, 2010

Judy A. Boyd
16283 Robinson Road
Gulfport, Mississippi 39503

Dear Mrs. Boyd,

In response to your request, you have permission to distribute and conduct a survey to middle school teachers, assistant principals, and principals in order to gather information regarding preparedness levels to respond to acts of violence. The response to the questionnaire is voluntary. After you collect and analyze the data, I encourage you to share your results with me so that the district my benefit from your findings.

I wish you the best of luck as you complete your doctoral requirements. Results gathered from your survey will be useful in future teacher preparations.

Sincerely,

Superintendent, School District

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.5509
www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **10110202**
PROJECT TITLE: **Preparedness Levels of Teachers, Assistant Principals, and Principals, in Middle Schools to Respond to Acts of Violence in a Mississippi School District**
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: **10/20/2010 to 03/01/2011**
PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation**
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **Judy Ann Boyd**
COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**
DEPARTMENT: **Educational Leadership**
FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **01/03/2011 to 01/02/2012**

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

1-5-2011
Date

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